

SELECTIONS FROM
BROWNING

EDITED BY

FREDERICK RYLAND, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF "PSYCHOLOGY," "ETHICS," "LOGIC," ETC., EDITOR OF
JOHNSON'S "LIVES OF THE POETS," ETC.



LONDON
G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.

1931

PREFACE.

THE object of the present volume is to serve as an introduction to the intelligent and honest study of Browning's poetry.

The pieces selected for study include some of the best and most popular of the shorter poems published up to 1864. Several copyright poems are given, and the text presented is in every case that of the latest editions issued during the poet's lifetime. The Editor and the publishers desire to thank Messrs Smith, Elder & Co., the representatives of the owners of the copyright, for their courteous permission to use this material.

There have been many books recently published which afford assistance in understanding the general purpose of Browning's poems. But experience shows that this is just what the average reader seldom has any doubt about. The difficulty occurs in matters of detail. When they are asked if they understand, not the drift of a given poem, but the language of the poem itself, the majority are obliged to compound with their consciences. The notes of the present volume aim at doing what no other Browning Primer or Browning Guide seems to attempt, but what is well worth attempting,—the systematic explanation of the difficult phrases and obscure allusions which, even in the relatively easy poems, confront the beginner.

Browning's outlook is so wide and so clear, and he is so keenly alive to the multifarious interests of the actual world, that he seems to me the best possible teacher for those standing on the threshold of life, whose years have hitherto been spent in the somewhat enervating atmosphere of the nursery and the schoolroom,—an atmosphere too often associated with timid prejudices and a “fugitive and cloistered virtue.” He introduces them to the bracing rivalry of ideals, æsthetic and speculative, moral and religious, which the discipline they have been subject to necessarily ignores. It seems no light thing that they should be brought to their first sight of this warfare under the guidance of a great soul, at once so devoted to the highest and noblest that we can aspire to, and yet so pre-eminently sane.

My best thanks are due to several friends who have read the proofs, and assisted me with valuable suggestions. Amongst those who have helped me, I should like specially to mention Miss A. M. Stoddart, Miss Constance Jacob, and Mr Edward Bell, M.A.

FREDERICK RYLAND.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION—	
Life of Browning,	xi
Some Characteristics of Browning's Poetry,	xix
The Obscurity of Browning's Poetry,	xxvi
Books Recommended,	xxix
 SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING—	
Song from "Pippa Passes,"	1
Incident of the French Camp,	1
The Pied Piper of Hamelin,	8
"How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix,"	12
The Patriot,	15
The Lost Leader,	16
The Italian in England,	17
The Englishman in Italy,	22
"De Gustibus—,"	30
By the Fire-side,	31
How it Strikes a Contemporary,	42
Andrea del Sarto,	45
The Guardian Angel,	53
A Grammarian's Funeral,	55
The Bishop orders his Tomb at Saint Praxed's Church,	59
An Epistle,	62
Oleon,	71
"Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came,"	80
Home-thoughts from Abroad,	88
Meeting at Night,	89

	PAGE
SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING— <i>continued.</i>	
Parting at Morning,	89
Up at a Villa—Down in the City,	90
The Lost Mistress, :	93
Evelyn Hope,	94
A Lovers' Quarrel,	96
Abt Vogler,	102
Rabbi Ben Ezra,	107
Prospice,	114
NOTES,	117

INTRODUCTION.

I. LIFE OF BROWNING.

ROBERT BROWNING was born in the then comparatively rural parish of Camberwell on May 7, 1812. His father was a clerk in the Bank of England, a man of more than ordinary culture and originality of mind, who possessed a library of six thousand volumes. The poet's mother was Scotch. Both were "evangelical," and they attended a Dissenting chapel. We may see in Browning's life the effects of this somewhat narrow upbringing. He went to no public school and to no university. Till the age of fourteen he remained at an establishment for young gentlemen, kept by a Mr Ready at Peckham, after which he was placed under the care of a private tutor. When he was seventeen he went for a term to a Greek class at University College, Gower Street. The systematic use of his father's admirable library was probably the most important factor of the poet's early education. Whilst still a mere boy he read the great Elizabethans and Byron with special delight; and when he was only fourteen his good, loving, evangelical mother brought him from London (at his request) the works of Shelley, adding, at the suggestion of the bookseller, those of Keats—poets whose fame does not appear to have previously penetrated into the rustic retreats of Camberwell and Peckham.

The most striking fact in Browning's youth is perhaps the assured fashion in which at the age of seventeen or eighteen he made up his mind that he would make poetry his career and his profession. Influenced by Byron, and afterwards still more strongly by Shelley, he deliberately chose, and without any important hesitation adhered to, this lofty election. What is almost more strange is that his choice had the entire approval of his father, which is alone sufficient to mark off the elder Browning as no ordinary bank clerk.

During the year 1832, at the age of twenty, the young poet wrote his first printed poem—*Pauline: a Fragment of a Confession*, which was published in January 1833. It showed the influence of Shelley, but not by way of mere imitation. The blank verse is a little stiff, but the language is almost free from the oddities of structure which mark the later poems. The *Athenæum* spoke of it in terms of high praise: "There is not a little true poetry in this very little book; here and there we have a touch of the mysterious which we cannot admire; and now and then a want of true melody, which we can forgive, with perhaps more abruptness than is necessary: all that, however, is as a grain of sand in a cup of pure water, compared to the nature, and passion, and fancy of the poem." The *Literary Gazette* described it as a "dreamy volume without an object, and unfit for publication." In the *Monthly Repository*, edited by the poet's friend, Mr Fox, a cultivated Dissenting minister, it received a warm welcome.

Browning's literary labours were laid aside for a short time during the winter of 1833-4, when he made a three months' journey to Russia, in company with the Russian Consul-General. This seems to have turned his thoughts to diplomacy, and he applied, unsuccessfully, for an appointment in a mission to Persia. He was back in London in

hands to be the most difficult among his works, and presents in the fullest development the least estimable features of his style. Everyone knows how Tennyson is said to have declared that there were only two lines in it which he understood, and that both of them were untrue—viz., the first—

“Who will may hear Sordello’s story told.

and the last:

“Who would has heard Sordello’s story told.”

Carlyle affirmed that Mrs Carlyle had read it through without being able to tell whether Sordello were a man, a city, or a book.

In the following year (1841) appeared *Pippa Passes*, a delightful work, which in its main outlines is as clear as *Sordello* is indefinite. The dramatic shape of the work is only a matter of form; the plot is altogether wanting in unity, and the stories of which it is composed are left half told; but some of the characters are superbly drawn, and it is full of thrilling human interest. It was issued as No. 1 of a series of volumes of poetry to be called *Bells and Pomegranates*, sixteen double-columned pages of close print for sixpence. Later volumes were increased in number of pages and raised in price. In rapid succession appeared other numbers of the series: *King Victor and King Charles* (1842); *Dramatic Lyrics*, which included *Cavalier Times*, *My Last Duchess*, *Johannes Agricola*, *The Pied Piper*, etc. (1842); *The Return of the Druses* (1843); *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* (1843); *Colombe’s Birthday* (1844). The *Blot in the 'Scutcheon* was a three-act tragedy produced by Macready at Drury Lane. The poet and the manager quarrelled over it; and Browning thought that not enough had been done to ensure its success. Yet, according to Browning, “if applause means success, the

play thus maimed and maltreated was successful enough." Phelps, who with Miss Helen Faucit had taken the leading part in it, revived it in 1848 at Sadler's Wells, again with applause. Yet it only ran a few nights. *Colombe's Birthday* was not put on the stage till April 1853, when Miss Faucit produced it at the Haymarket.

In the autumn of 1844 Browning paid his second visit to Italy. Next year he published the seventh number of *Bells and Pomegranates*,—the admirable volume called *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). This, like the *Dramatic Lyrics* of 1842, consisted of short poems, and included many of those most frequently reprinted in selections,—e.g., *The Italian in England*, *The Englishman in Italy*, *The Tomb at St Praxed's*, *The Lost Leader*, *Pictor Ignotus*, *Home Thoughts from Abroad*.

It was in 1845 that Browning met his future wife, Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett (1806–1861), herself a poet of high rank, known already as the author of *The Seraphim* (1838) and *Poems* (1844).

She was a very delicate woman, who spent most of her life on a sofa. Her father had discouraged a more active life: he had apparently made up his mind that she must die; and was unwilling to allow her to marry or to travel for her health. He said afterwards of Browning: "I have no objection to the young man, but my daughter should have been thinking of another world!" It was useless to hope that he would ever consent to the marriage,¹ and the two were secretly married at Marylebone Parish Church (Sept. 12, 1846). A few days afterwards they left England together. Not even the remarkable improvement in Mrs Browning's health and her perfect happiness would reconcile this unnatural parent to the marriage. The two poets went to live their almost ideal life

¹ *Letters of Mrs Browning*, i. 280 seq.; *Mrs Orr's Life*, p. 145.

at Florence, where, after some changes, they settled down in the apartments in the old palace known as Casa Guidi. Here their only child, the painter Robert Barrett Browning, was born in 1849.

In the year of his marriage Browning published the last number (the eighth) of *Bells and Pomegranates*, containing two of the most popular and beautiful of his longer poems, *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. In 1850 followed *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* and two poems which deal with the Judgment and Resurrection and other Christian beliefs in a novel way, but in no sceptical spirit.

It was not till 1855 that Browning published his next work, *Men and Women*, a collection of short pieces of the same type as the *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*. In this he reached perhaps his highest level of sustained achievement. A more wonderful gallery of soul-pictures has never been produced. Artists, musicians, philosophers, statesmen, lovers, and men of the world unveil their characters, as it were, unconsciously. Nothing more picturesque, more incisive, more full of insight into character, has ever been written.

In 1861 Mrs Browning died, and was buried among her beloved Florentines. Her husband came to live in London, and for many years occupied a house in Warwick Crescent.

His next volume, which was called *Dramatis Personæ* (1864), belonged to the same type as its immediate predecessor, and showed no falling off. *James Lee's Wife*, *A Death in the Desert*, *Caliban upon Setebos*, *Abt Vogler* and *Rabbi Ben Ezra* were included in it.

Up to the present Browning had never been a popular poet. He had warm admirers, and among these admirers were some of the most illustrious literary men of the day. But the general public stood aloof, and looked on him as too eccentric and too obscure to be taken seriously, and even critics of the highest standing and the greatest breadth of

view regarded him without enthusiasm. What his position was may be understood from the fact that Henri Taine, in his very fresh and modern *History of English Literature* (1863-64), does not even mention him. Mrs Browning is praised, but her husband is passed over in silence. The turning-point had come, however, and to this the new edition of his poems (1868), and the publication of a volume of selections, made with considerable judgment (1872), no doubt contributed. In June 1867 the University of Oxford conferred on him by diploma the degree of M.A., and he was elected to an honorary fellowship at Balliol College in the October of the same year. Next year, on the death of John Stuart Mill, he was offered a nomination to the Lord Rectorship of the University of St Andrews, and Mrs Orr speaks of the offer as virtually guaranteeing his election.¹ If so much unanimity among the students was assured, it speaks eloquently of his growing fame.

That fame was largely increased by the publication, in the years 1868-69, of the *Ring and the Book*, which the *Athenæum* welcomed as the greatest poetic achievement of the time, and the most profound spiritual treasure that England had produced since the days of Shakespeare. It consisted of four volumes of blank verse, containing over 21,000 lines, in which the same story of murder, treachery, and meanness is presented in detail from different points of view. It is marred by sameness and by inordinate verbosity. The child-wife Pompilia tells her story in much the same language as her elderly and wicked husband, Count Guido, and the young Canon Caponsacchi; and all talk a good deal more like Robert Browning than any other human creature before or since. The unhappy plan renders much vain repetition inevitable; but, besides this, every page is full of unnecessary digressions and parentheses. In spite of all this

¹ Mrs Orr's *Life*, p. 277.

and of the want of directly presented movement, the poem never fails to command interest and admiration.

From this point forward Browning's position as a poet was fully established, and the growth in popular estimation only kept pace with the greater respect paid him by leaders of literary opinion. Yet what he wrote after the *Ring and the Book*, though amounting to almost as much again as his hitherto published works, can scarcely be said to have added to his reputation. Much of it is as good as all but the best of his earlier work, but he strikes no new note. To use the cant phrase, his "message" was already fully delivered.

It is not necessary to dwell on any volume published after 1870. *Balaustion's Adventure* and *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau* appeared in 1871; the former is a transcription of the *Alcestis* of Euripides with an introduction, the latter an "appreciation," in the technical sense, of the character of Napoleon III. *Fifine at the Fair* (1872) and *Red Cotton Nightcap Country* (1873), *Pacchiarotto and other Poems* (1876), *La Saisiaz* (1878), *Dramatic Idyls* (two series, 1879 and 1880), *Jocoseria* (1883), *Parleyings with certain People of Importance in their Day* (1887), were the chief of those that followed. The volumes of 1876, 1879, 1880, 1883, and 1889 belonged to the same category as those of 1855 and 1864; they were mainly collections of short poems of dramatic self-revelation, mingled with lyrics. This last volume called *Asolando* (with a play on the name of the little town of Asolo in the Venetian territory at which it was written), published in 1889, when he was 77, contains work as full of force and vitality as the best of its predecessors. *Summum Bonum* and the *Pope and the Net* show no sign of flagging energy or failing ear.

Browning's later life was spent chiefly in London, with usually one or two excursions to France or Italy every year.

He was the centre of an admiring group of friends and an adoring crowd of disciples, and he enjoyed with dignity and self-respect the incense offered him. Like his friend Tennyson, he had not the pain of feeling that his force was abated; both had the secret of renewing their youth.

The end came at Venice, after a long visit to Asolo. His son had just read the telegram from the publishers, announcing the triumphant success of *Asolando*, when the brave and noble old man fell into his last sleep, on the night of December 12, 1889. Assuredly, *felix opportunitate mortis*.

II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF BROWNING'S POETRY,

There is no need to attempt a formal essay on Browning's poetry. So much has been written on it that we are in danger of forgetting the original in the multitude of his expositors. It seems, however, worth while to try and point out some of the chief characteristics of his work.

The most marked feature in Browning is his interest in character. He is a great master in the art of representing the inner side of human beings, their mental and moral qualities. Hence the claim is sometimes made for him that he is a great dramatic poet. This is a claim which cannot be substantiated. His dramas have as little vitality as Byron's, though for different reasons. He cannot interest us in his plot, or represent his *dramatis personæ* in action. He catches his characters in a cool moment of introspection or of guarded self-revelation, and he lets us see in their minds the causes and results of previous actions as few other poets have been able to do. But, directly we behold them actually carrying out their plans, we feel a sense of failure. Their words cease to be appropriate, and become too often con-

ventional and sometimes grotesque. The poet's sense of fitness and even his sense of humour desert him. Thus almost at the end of *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon* the hero exclaims—

“Ah, I had forgotten,
I am dying !”

It was through no mere perversity of chance but through their own proper demerits that Browning's plays failed on the boards. He was lacking in some of the most essential qualifications of the dramatist. Nevertheless, it is yet true, as Mrs Orr maintains, that “everything which, as a poet, he thinks and feels, comes to him in a dramatic form.” He presents not only single characters in solitude, but also groups of characters in mutual action and reaction, and he can make each describe how he feels and thinks. Yet he cannot convince us that we see them influencing each other. In his most successful poems he presents a character in a condition of pause, and makes clear to us by means of soliloquy or continued address how he got there. No one has ever given us pictures so full of significant detail, with such an intimate and convincing self-revelation. Cleon, Karshish, Sludge, Franceschini, Andrea, Blougram, and, above all, that other Bishop (who ordered his tomb), stand out with startling vividness and plausibility. Sometimes it may be thought that the psychologist is a little too prominent; he lets us see, perhaps, rather too often his interest in the odd and abnormal types, or those which seem such to the superficial observer. He emphasises antithetical attributes in a character a little overmuch. This seems to me the main sin of his Blougram and Hohenstiel-Schwangau; in his smaller portraits it less frequently occurs, though I think it can be seen in a slighter form in his Karshish (compare for instance lines 278-281). But making every allowance, we must acknowledge that no great English poet since Shakespeare has

shown such a varied and subtle insight into human character.

Although he has written little continuous narrative poetry, yet in this department of his art Browning takes a high rank. When he wants to put before us rapid and impetuous movement, he equals Scott at his best. There are several passages in the *Ring and the Book* which illustrate this; and *How they brought the Good News* alone is sufficient to prove it. His descriptions of scenery and natural objects are extraordinarily vivid. Whether included in many stanzas, as in *By the Fire-Side*, or struck out in a few words, like the delicious line in *Pippa Passes*—

“May’s warm, slow, yellow, moonlit summer nights,”

they are often beyond all praise. Nothing has ever been done better, scarcely anything else so well.

His lyrics have a charm of their own which marks them off from all others. To mention only two, no other poet has given us quite the same blending of richness and poignancy as we meet with in *Home Thoughts from Abroad* and *Summum Bonum*. They have, besides, all the essential qualities of good lyrics, unity of feeling, intensity, and individuality. Nothing more thoroughly lyrical is to be found anywhere.

Browning is what is called a philosophical poet. Like Wordsworth or Shelley, he comes to us with a more or less distinct theory of the relation of man to the universe, and exhibits this theory by means of imaginary characters and scenes. In a philosophical poet we must not expect the rigid consistency or the systematic completeness of the speculative thinker. But we have a right to look for a deeper apprehension of the general truths underlying the visible universe, a greater thoroughness and steadiness of view than that of the plain man. He must go beneath the surface

of conventional morality and conventional religion, though he need not be provided with a new system, elaborated in all its details. That would require a degree of abstract thinking incompatible with poetry, for the poet necessarily expresses himself in terms of the visible. All this is true of Browning. He was not a profound philosopher. But it is perhaps open to objection that he had more of the air of a profound philosopher than a poet ought to wear. His occasionally uncouth attempts to speak out what he has to say, impress us with the notion that he is striving to utter some truth too deep for ordinary language. He seems to come as one preaching a new revelation, as having a "message" which he alone can deliver. This view of him cannot, I think, be defended. His interest in the problems of life and thought is purely practical; though he has, besides, an artistic interest in human character. He challenges few of the old theological and metaphysical dogmas which have satisfied the spiritual needs of so many centuries. He is distinctly conservative in his main positions: he accepts the doctrines of a personal God and of personal immortality, and even perhaps the more specifically Christian doctrine of the Incarnation.

But the truth of which he is most assured is the worth of life. He is an optimist to the core. Like Carlyle, he preaches a doctrine of strenuous endeavour, but with more hope, with completer ideals, and with wider sympathy for all sorts of good. He is not a mere ascetic, protesting against art and culture as well as folly. He finds all things good, though virtue is the best. Imperfection is due to an inability to see things in their proper relation to each other. Our very weaknesses and follies have their value; we must learn to tolerate frailties which are an earnest of higher things. In *Abt Vogler*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and the *Epilogue to Asolando* we have the fullest and most uncompromising statement of this faith. Browning was

"One who never turned his back, but marched breast forward—
Never doubted clouds would break—
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph;
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
Sleep to wake."

This firm conviction that life is worth living is Browning's most important characteristic. He is one of the chosen band who rolled back, as far as England is concerned, the morbid pessimism, the sickly disdain of active life, which has infected so much of European literature during the present century. Tennyson, Carlyle, Dickens, all in their different ways have taught us the same lesson. With less of appalling dignity than Tennyson, less of scornful denunciation than Carlyle, and less of merely amiable sentiment than Dickens, he has shown us how to look life and death bravely in the face.

Browning is a vital, energising force in literature, for which it is difficult to be sufficiently grateful. He inspires readers of all ages and conditions with an impulse of courage and endeavour, not by demonstration or denunciation, but by calling out their sympathy for the weak, the unheroic and the unachieved. He brings us into charity with all aspects of human nature. He is no scoffer, no fanatic; neither Puritan, nor Materialist, nor Rationalist. He will not, in order to emphasise the spiritual, deny the value of the natural. Of him, with more truth than of any other English poet, it may be said, "he saw life steadily, and saw it whole."

We must not pass by, without a word of notice, his markedly artistic bent,—his love of architecture, painting, sculpture, and music,—which leads him to dwell even on the qualities of materials and the details of technical processes. Such poems as *Andrea del Sarto*, *The Bishop orders his Tomb*, *Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha*, are full of instances. No other English poet could have written them, because no other has

anything like the same degree of knowledge and sympathy with art. Religion, Patriotism, and Philosophy are all nobly reflected in our poetry; but, except in Browning, not Art.

Browning's worst defect, apart from his obscurity, is roughness of workmanship. It is not a necessary defect, since *Pauline* and even *Paracelsus* are tolerably free from it. His later verse sometimes refuses to scan when there is no special reason for roughness. Why should Guido say

"I am representative of a great line,"

when he is supposed to be talking blank verse? Some of the lines afflict one as a mere series of jolts and jars. By omission of necessary particles this unpleasant effect is increased.¹ He often rhymes recklessly, employing awkward double rhymes, for which he invents monstrous compound words. The beautiful *Home Thoughts from the Sea* is marred by the last rhyme. Who can tolerate the first stanza of *A Pretty Woman*, or the tasteless and tuneless tenth?—

"Why with beauty need there money be?

Love with liking?

Crush the fly-king

In his gauze, because no honey-bee?"

Making every allowance for intentional humour, rhymes such as those that startle us in the *Grammarian's Funeral* are an æsthetic blunder. If we consider lines 5-7, 13-15, 70-72, 98-100 in this poem (see pp. 55-57 below), we see that the effect is in every way disastrous. They are Hudibrastic rhymes in a position where Hudibrastic rhymes are an impertinence, and they are bad at that. Accents fall on syllables which will bear no accent, and the whole effect is awkward and strained. Look at this—

¹ See p. xxviii below.

“ He ventured neck or nothing—heaven’s success
 Found, or earth’s failure :
 ‘ Wilt thou trust death or not ? ’ He answered, ‘ Yes :
 Hence with life’s pale lure ! ’ ”

It seems to me a mere superfluity of naughtiness to ruin so fine a passage by this vapid and absurd rhyme. Other instances are easy enough to find. Look at stanzas i., iv., xii., xxii. of *Childe Roland*. Everybody with an ear must feel that the choice of words is not natural, and that the form of the verses has been determined by the rhyme. With him to a greater extent than with most poets,

“ Rhyme the rudder is of verses.”

Browning worked too quickly. “ *The Return of the Druses* was written in five days, an act a day ; so also was the *Blot in the ‘Scutcheon.’*”¹ During one fortnight in 1852 he produced a poem a day.² It is easy to understand that this led to an exaggeration of his characteristic faults. By a stroke of lucky audacity he hit on some extraordinary chime of words, and once written he would not alter it. But still more frequently we must ascribe the defect to a perverted sense of fun. He is charmed by the distortion, and he becomes a prey to the same love of the unusual and the odd which led the Metaphysical Poets of the seventeenth century astray.

Thus it happens that his blank verse is often finer than his rhyme. But when he is at his best in some short lyrical flight, where the first unconscious dexterity of passion saves him from all possibility of going wrong, who has ever rhymed with more freshness and charm ?

¹ W. Sharp, *Life of Browning*, p. 205.

² Mrs Orr, *Life of Browning*, p. 383.

III. THE OBSCURITY OF BROWNING'S POETRY.

Browning is certainly difficult to understand, as he was quite willing to acknowledge. "I can have little doubt," he says in a letter now in the British Museum, "that my writing has been in the main too hard for many I should have been pleased to communicate with; but I never designedly tried to puzzle people, as some of my critics have supposed. On the other hand, I never pretended to offer a substitute for a cigar or a game at dominoes to an idle man." But the confession does not go far enough. There are degrees of difficulty, and there are kinds of difficulty. No one would regard *In Memoriam* or the *Prelude* as a substitute for a cigar; yet the man of average intelligence and average culture who reads them seldom finds himself confronted by passage after passage of such difficulty that not only the main drift but the meaning of individual clauses is absolutely unintelligible. And that this is the case with Browning every reader, not only of *Sordello*, but of some of the more genial works, is obliged to confess. His poems are often riddles or problems, appealing more strongly to the purely intellectual faculties than to the sentiment of beauty.

There can be no doubt, in spite of his disclaimer that he "never designedly tried to puzzle people," that he relied for part of his effect on the special kind of attention aroused by the sense of difficulty. His very titles show that. They are direct challenges to our curiosity. Some good people resent such a challenge, and their first impulse is to refuse to try and understand what seems intended to puzzle them. This is a very sensible attitude towards work which has no other claim to our regard. But it fails to satisfy in the presence of a poet of such unquestionable genius as Browning, most of whose work is perfectly lucid and as

beautiful as it is clear. Every great writer has his method of presentation. We have no right to impatiently resent it; our duty and our privilege is to try to understand and appreciate it.

The obscurity is not so universal as some would have us think. Many of his shorter poems are entirely free from difficulty. Many others only require a word or two of explanation. But there remains a large proportion of his work which undoubtedly demands close attention and the use of a good reference library if we are properly to comprehend it.

To what is this unusual degree of difficulty due?

It is not due, as I have already ventured to say, to the extreme profundity of the thoughts to which he has to give expression. He is no doubt deeper than Scott or Moore, but not deeper than Wordsworth or Tennyson, whose writings are quite intelligible to the ordinary reader. Nor is it due to any claim to mysticism, although in his younger days he seems to have been considered dreamy and mystical. He does not profess to hold a doctrine too spiritual for expression in intelligible language.

It is due almost entirely, on the one hand, to the sources from which his ordinary illustrations, metaphors, and similes are taken, and, on the other hand, to his style.

His poems nearly all refer in minute detail to the scenery, manners, and sentiments of Southern Europe. Books of travel, the atlas, the guide book, the gazetteer, and the Italian dictionary have to be brought into requisition; and they often fail to elucidate the special difficulty that troubles us. If the student will turn to the notes in this edition on the *Englishman in Italy* (pp. 125-127), he will be able to realise this fact. Besides this, he has numberless allusions to the history of painting, architecture, and music, of which the average Englishman knows very little, and to the history of mediæval Italy, of which he knows nothing.

This is illustrated by such poems as *Andrea del Sarto* or the *Grammarian's Funeral*, but it reaches its extreme in passages like that beginning about line 250 in *Sordello* (pp. 60-2 in the edition in 18 vols.). Not to know who or what Arpo, Yoland, the Trevisan, Ecelo, Godego's lord, Ramon, Marostica, Cartiglion, Bassano, Loria, Roncaglio, severally may be—and these names occur with others somewhat better known within thirteen lines—is not to confess a shameless ignorance. There are many elementary school-teachers who would be puzzled by some of them, and how many Eton masters could get them all right?

A special feature in this difficulty of allusion is due to the fact that Browning sometimes makes mistakes, or inserts fictitious allusions invented *ad hoc*. Thus Calvano (see p. 126) I begin to despair of, and to say, with Mrs Prig, "I don't believe there's no sich a mountain."

But it is the style of Browning which does most to puzzle the beginner. In many of the short poems, indeed, there is nothing to complain of. The great part of the present volume is written in English as clear and expressive as any that will be found in the whole range of our poetry. In the longer poems here included, the language is often more puzzling. In *Sordello* and the *Ring and the Book* it is open to serious objection. At its worst his style is at once verbose and elliptic. He sometimes makes his sentences long and confusing by the use of many parentheses. He sometimes cuts them down to the quick, by omission of necessary parts of speech. They may be easy enough to understand when the omissions have once been supplied, yet not so easy when you do not even realise that there are omissions, but attribute the confusion to your own stupidity or the profundity of the poet. He omits prepositions, articles, personal and relative pronouns, and auxiliary verbs at his pleasure. He employs uncalled-for and graceless inversions. He adopts slang or

obsolete or provincial words, such as *prog*, *bubbly-jock*, *flix*, *encolure*, *slughorn*, and sometimes (as in the last case) uses them wrong. All these eccentricities are confusing and alarming when taken separately, but when employed in combination they lead to passages of real difficulty. One can, it is true, read a great deal of Browning, and certainly read a great deal about Browning, without troubling to unravel any of them. One can discourse at length and with eloquence of his philosophy and his "message" without comprehending the language in which he expresses himself. But the serious student knows that if a great writer is worth reading he is worth understanding.

IV. BOOKS RECOMMENDED.

The student will find the following books of chief service :—

MRS ORR, "Handbook to Robert Browning's Works."

DR HILL, "Browning Notes."

DR BERDOE, "The Browning Cyclopedia."

"The Browning Society's Papers" (Parts I.-XIII.).

MRS ORR, "Life of Robert Browning."

W. SHARP, "Life of Robert Browning."

Less important, but of value, are

J. T. NETTLESHIP, "Robert Browning: Essays and Thoughts."

A. SYMONS, "Introduction to the Study of Browning."

MISS DEFRIES, "Browning Primer."

F. M. HOLLAND, "Stories from Browning."

SELECTIONS FROM BROWNING.

SONG FROM "PIPPA PASSES."

THE year's at the spring
And day's at the morn ;
Morning's at seven ;
The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
The lark's on the wing ;
The snail's on the thorn :
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world !

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

I.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :
 A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow
 Oppressive with its mind.

II.

Just as perhaps he mused "My plans
That soar, to earth may fall, 10
Let once my army-leader Lannes
Waver at yonder wall,"—
Out 'twixt the battery-smokes there flew
A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew 15
Until he reached the mound.

III.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
And held himself erect
By just his horse's mane, a boy :
You hardly could suspect— 20
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
Was all but shot in two.

IV.

" Well," cried he, " Emperor, by God's grace 25
We've got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal's in the market-place,
And you'll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart's desire, 30
Perched him !" The chief's eye flashed ; his plans
Soared up again like fire.

V.

The chief's eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle's eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes ; 35

"You're wounded!" "Nay," the soldier's pride
 Touched to the quick, he said:
 "I'm killed, Sire!" And his chief beside,
 Smiling the boy fell dead.

40

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN;

A CHILD'S STORY.

(WRITTEN FOR, AND INSCRIBED TO W. M. THE YOUNGER.)

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
 By famous Hanover city;
 The river Weser, deep and wide,
 Washes its wall on the southern side;
 A pleasanter spot you never spied;
 But, when begins my ditty,
 Almost five hundred years ago,
 To see the townsfolk suffer so
 From vermin, was a pity.

5

II.

Rats!
 They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
 And bit the babies in the cradles,
 And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
 And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
 Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

10

15

20

III.

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking :
 "'Tis clear," cried they, "our Mayor's a noddy ;
 And as for our Corporation—shocking
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine 25
 For dolts that can't or won't determine
 What's best to rid us of our vermin !
 You hope, because you're old and obese,
 To find in the furry civic robe ease?
 Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking 30
 To find the remedy we're lacking,
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing !"
 At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council, 35
 At length the Mayor broke silence :
 "For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
 I wish I were a mile hence !
 It's easy to bid one rack one's brain—
 I'm sure my poor head aches again, 40
 I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
 Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap !"
 Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap ?
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that ?" 45
 (With the Corporation as he sat,
 Looking little though wondrous fat ;
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,
 Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous 50
 For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
 "Only a scraping of shoes on the mat ?
 Anything like the sound of a rat
 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat !"

V.

"Come in!"—the Mayor cried, looking bigger : 55
 And in did come the strangest figure !
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red,
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60
 And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
 No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in ;
 There was no guessing his kith and kin :
 And nobody could enough admire 65
 The tall man and his quaint attire.
 Quoth one : "It's as my great-grandsire,
 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone !"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table : 70
 And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm able,
 By means of a secret charm, to draw
 All creatures living beneath the sun,
 That creep or swim or fly or run,
 After me so as you never saw ! 75
 And I chiefly use my charm
 On creatures that do people harm,
 The mole and toad and newt and viper ;
 And people call me the Pied Piper."
 (And here they noticed round his neck 80
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
 To match with his coat of the self-same cheque ;
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying
 As if impatient to be playing 85
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
 "Yet," said he, "poor piper as I am,

In Tartary I freed the Cham,
 Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ; 90
 I eased in Asia the Nizam
 Of a monstrous brood of vampyre-bats :
 And as for what your brain bewilders,
 If I can rid your town of rats
 Will you give me a thousand guilders ? ” 95
 “ One ? fifty thousand ! ”—was the exclamation
 Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
 Smiling first a little smile,
 As if he knew what magic slept 100
 In his quiet pipe the while ;
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ; 105
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered ;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling :
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, grey rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, 115
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
 Followed the Piper for their lives.
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing, 120
 Until they came to the river Weser,
 Wherein all plunged and perished !
 —Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,

Swam across and lived to carry
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished) 125
 To Rat-land home his commentary :
 Which was, "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
 Into a cider-press's gripe : 130
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :
 And it seemed as if a voice 135
 (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
 Is breathed) called out, 'Oh rats, rejoice !
 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !' 140
 And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,
 Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me !'
 —I found the Weser rolling o'er me." 145

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
 Consult with carpenters and builders, 150
 And leave in our town not even a trace
 Of the rats !"—when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
 With a, "First, if you please, my thousand guilders !"

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ; 155
 So did the Corporation too.

For council dinners made rare havoc
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
 And half the money would replenish
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
 With a gipsy coat of red and yellow !
 "Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing wink,
 "Our business was done at the river's brink ;
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink, 165
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
 From the duty of giving you something for drink,
 And a matter of money to put in your poke ;
 But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170
 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
 A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty !"

X.

The Piper's face fell, and he cried
 "No trifling ! I can't wait, beside ! 175
 I've promised to visit by dinner-time
 Bagdat, and accept the prime
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor : 180
 With him I proved no bargain-driver,
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !
 And folks who put me in a passion
 May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook 185
 Being worse treated than a Cook ?
 Insulted by a lazy ribald
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
 You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,
 Blow your pipe there till you burst !" 190

XII.

Once more he stept into the street
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning 195
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling,
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chattering, 200
And, like fowls in a farm-yard when barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls, 205
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood, 210
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
—Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat, 215
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters !
However he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220
And after him the children pressed
Great was the joy in every breast.

" He never can cross that mighty top !
 He's forced to let the piping drop,
 And we shall see our children stop ! " 225
 When, lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
 A wondrous portal opened wide,
 As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed ;
 And the Piper advanced and the children followed,
 And when all were in to the very last, 230
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
 Did I say, all ? No ! One was lame,
 And could not dance the whole of the way ;
 And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say,— 235
 " It's dull in our town since my playmates left !
 I can't forget that I'm bereft
 Of all the pleasant sights they see,
 Which the Piper also promised me.
 For he led us, he said, to a joyous land, 240
 Joining the town and just at hand,
 Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
 And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 And everything was strange and new ;
 The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, 245
 And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
 And honey-bees had lost their stings,
 And horses were born with eagles' wings .
 And just as I became assured
 My lame foot would be speedily cured. 250
 The music stopped and I stood still,
 And found myself outside the hill,
 Left alone against my will,
 To go now limping as before,
 And never hear of that country more ! " 255

* * * * *
 xiv

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher's pate

A text which says that heaven's gate
 Opes to the rich at as easy rate
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in ! 260
 The Mayor sent East, West, North and South,
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
 If he'd only return the way he went, 265
 And bring the children behind him.
 But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
 And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
 They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly 270
 If, after the day of the month and year,
 These words did not as well appear,
 "And so long after what happened here
 On the Twenty-second of July,
 Thirteen hundred and seventy-six : " 275
 And the better in memory to fix
 The place of the children's last retreat,
 They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
 Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
 Was sure for the future to lose his labour. 280
 Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
 But opposite the place of the cavern
 They wrote the story on a column,
 And on the great church-window painted 285
 The same, to make the world acquainted
 How their children were stolen away,
 And there it stands to this very day.
 And I must not omit to say
 That in Transylvania there's a tribe 290
 Of alien people who ascribe
 The outlandish ways and dress
 On which their neighbours lay such stress,
 To their fathers and mothers having risen
 Out of some subterraneous prison 295

Into which they were trepanned
 Long time ago in a mighty band
 Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
 But how or why, they don't understand.

XV.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 800
 Of scores out with all men—especially pipers !
 And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
 If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise !

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
 FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
 I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
 “Good speed !” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;
 “Speed !” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
 Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, 5
 And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
 Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
 place ;
 I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
 Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ; 15
At Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time ! "

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
With resolute shoulders, each butting away
The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray.

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent 25
back
For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay
spur !
" Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
" We'll remember at Aix "—for one heard the quick
wheeze
Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,
And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like 40
 chaff ;
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
 And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight !"

VIII.

"How they'll greet us !"—and all in a moment his
 roan
 Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
 And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45
 Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
 With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
 And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
 Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;
 Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad
 or good,
 Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is—friends flocking round 55
 As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
 And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
 As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
 Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
 Was no more than his due who brought good news 60
 from Ghent.

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
A year ago on this very day.

5

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
Had I said, "Good folk, mere noise repels—
But give me your sun from yonder skies !"
They had answered, "And afterward, what else ?"

10

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
To give it my loving friends to keep !
Nought man could do, have I left undone :
And you-see my harvest, what I reap
This very day, now a year is run.

15

IV.

There's nobody on the house-tops now—
Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
For the best of the sight is, all allow,
At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

20

V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;

And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds. 25

VI.

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
 " Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
 Me ? "—God might question ; now instead,
 'Tis God shall repay : I am safer so. 30

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others she lets us devote ;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver, 5
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :
 How all our copper had gone for his service !
 Rags,—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye, 10
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from
 their graves !
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen, 15
 —He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;

Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire : 20
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One wrong more to man, one more insult to God !
 Life's night begins : let him never come back to us ! 25
 There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ; 30
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND.

THAT second time they hunted me
 From hill to plain, from shore to sea,
 And Austria, hounding far and wide
 Her blood-hounds thro' the country-side,
 Breathed hot and instant on my trace,— 5
 I made six days a hiding-place
 Of that dry green old aqueduct
 Where I and Charles, when boys, have plucked
 The fire-flies from the roof above,
 Bright creeping thro' the moss they love : 10
 —How long it seems since Charles was lost !
 Six days the soldiers crossed and crossed
 The country in my very sight ;
 And when that peril ceased at night,
 The sky broke out in red dismay 15
 With signal fires ; well, there I lay
 Close covered o'er in my recess,
 Up to the neck in ferns and cress,

Thinking on Metternich our friend,
 And Charles's miserable end, 20
 And much beside, two days; the third,
 Hunger o'ercame me when I heard
 The peasants from the village go
 To work among the maize; you know,
 With us in Lombardy, they bring 25
 Provisions packed on mules, a string
 With little bells that cheer their task,
 And casks, and boughs on every cask
 To keep the sun's heat from the wine;
 These I let pass in jingling line, 30
 And, close on them, dear noisy crew,
 The peasants from the village, too;
 For at the very rear would troop
 Their wives and sisters in a group
 To help, I knew. When these had passed, 35
 I threw my glove to strike the last,
 Taking the chance: she did not start,
 Much less cry out, but stooped apart,
 One instant rapidly glanced round,
 And saw me beckon from the ground. 40
 A wild bush grows and hides my crypt;
 She picked my glove up while she stripped
 A branch off, then rejoined the rest
 With that; my glove lay in her breast.
 Then I drew breath; they disappeared: 45
 It was for Italy I feared.

An hour, and she returned alone
 Exactly where my glove was thrown.
 Meanwhile came many thoughts: on me
 Rested the hopes of Italy. 50
 I had devised a certain tale
 Which, when 'twas told her, could not fail
 Persuade a peasant of its truth;
 I meant to call a freak of youth
 This hiding, and give hopes of pay, 55

And no temptation to betray.
 But when I saw that woman's face,
 Its calm simplicity of grace,
 Our Italy's own attitude
 In which she walked thus far, and stood, 60
 Planting each naked foot so firm,
 To crush the snake and spare the worm—
 At first sight of her eyes, I said,
 "I am that man upon whose head
 They fix the price, because I hate 55
 The Austrians over us: the State
 Will give you gold—oh, gold so much!—
 If you betray me to their clutch,
 And be your death, for aught I know,
 If once they find you saved their foe. 70
 Now, you must bring me food and drink,
 And also paper, pen and ink,
 And carry safe what I shall write
 To Padua, which you'll reach at night
 Before the duomo shuts; go in,
 And wait till Tenebræ begin; 75
 Walk to the third confessional,
 Between the pillar and the wall,
 And kneeling whisper, *Whence comes peace?*
 Say it a second time, then cease;
 And if the voice inside returns, 80
From Christ and Freedom; what concerns
The cause of Peace?—for answer, slip
 My letter where you placed your lip;
 Then come back happy we have done 85
 Our mother service—I, the son,
 As you the daughter of our land!"

Three mornings more, she took her stand
 In the same place, with the same eyes:
 I was no surer of sun-rise 90
 Than of her coming. We conferred
 Of her own prospects, and I heard

She had a lover—stout and tall,
 She said—then let her eyelids fall,
 “He could do much”—as if some doubt
 Entered her heart,—then, passing out,
 “She could not speak for others, who
 Had other thoughts ; herself she knew :”
 And so she brought me drink and food.
 After four days, the scouts pursued
 Another path ; at last arrived
 The help my Paduan friends contrived
 To furnish me : she brought the news.
 For the first time I could not choose
 But kiss her hand, and lay my own
 Upon her head—“This faith was shown
 To Italy, our mother ; she
 Uses my hand and blesses thee.”
 She followed down to the sea-shore ;
 I left and never saw her more.

How very long since I have thought
 Concerning—much less wished for—ought
 Beside the good of Italy,
 For which I live and mean to die !
 I never was in love ; and since
 Charles proved false, what shall now convince
 My inmost heart I have a friend ?
 However, if I pleased to spend
 Real wishes on myself—say, three—
 I know at least what one should be.
 I would grasp Metternich until
 I felt his red wet throat distil
 In blood thro’ these two hands. And next,
 —Nor much for that am I perplexed—
 Charles, perjured traitor, for his part,
 Should die slow of a broken heart
 Under his new employers. Last
 —Ah, there, what should I wish ? For fast
 Do I grow old and out of strength.

If I resolved to seek at length 130
My father's house again, how scared
They all would look, and unprepared !
My brothers live in Austria's pay
—Disowned me long ago, men say ;
And all my early mates who used 135
To praise me so—perhaps induced
More than one early step of mine—
Are turning wise : while some opine
“ Freedom grows license,” some suspect
“ Haste breeds delay,” and recollect 140
They always said, such premature
Beginnings never could endure !
So, with a sullen “ All's for best,”
The land seems settling to its rest.
I think then, I should wish to stand 145
This evening in that dear, lost land,
Over the sea the thousand miles,
And know if yet that woman smiles
With the calm smile ; some little farm
She lives in there, no doubt : what harm 150
If I sat on the door-side bench,
And, while her spindle made a trench
Fantastically in the dust,
Inquired of all her fortunes—just,
Her children's ages and their names, 155
And what may be the husband's aims
For each of them. I'd talk this out,
And sit there, for an hour about,
Then kiss her hand once more, and lay
Mine on her head, and go my way. 160

So much for idle wishing—how
It steals the time ! To business now.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY.

PIANO DI SORRENTO.

- FORTÙ, Fortù, my beloved one,
 Sit here by my side,
 On my knees put up both little feet!
 I was sure, if I tried,
 I could make you laugh spite of Scirocco. 5
 Now, open your eyes,
 Let me keep you amused till he vanish
 In black from the skies,
 With telling my memories over
 As you tell your beads; 10
 All the Plain saw me gather, I garland
 —The flowers or the weeds.
- Time for rain! for your long hot dry Autumn
 Had net-worked with brown
 The white skin of each grape on the bunches, 15
 Marked like a quail's crown,
 Those creatures you make such account of,
 Whose heads,—speckled white
 Over brown like a great spider's back,
 As I told you last night,— 20
 Your mother bites off for her supper.
 Red-ripe as could be,
 Pomegranates were chapping and splitting
 In halves on the tree :
 And betwixt the loose walls of great flintstone, 25
 Or in the thick dust
 On the path, or straight out of the rock-side,
 Wherever could thrust
 Some burnt sprig of bold hardy rock flower
 Its yellow face up, 30
 For the prize were great butterflies fighting,
 Some five for one cup.

So, I guessed, ere I got up this morning,
What change was in store,
By the quick rustle-down of the quail-nets 35
Which woke me before
I could open my shutter, made fast
With a bough and a stone,
And look thro' the twisted dead vine-twigs,
Sole lattice that's known. 40
Quick and sharp rang the rings down the net-poles,
While, busy beneath,
Your priest and his brother tugged at them,
The rain in their teeth.
And out upon all the flat house-roofs 45
Where split figs lay drying,
The girls took the frails under cover :
Nor use seemed in trying
To get out the boats and go fishing,
For, under the cliff, 50
Fierce the black water frothed o'er the blind rock.
No seeing our skiff
Arrive about noon from Amalfi,
—Our fisher arrive,
And pitch down his basket before us, 55
All trembling alive
With pink and grey jellies, your sea-fruit ;
You touch the strange lumps,
And mouths gape there, eyes open, all manner
Of horns and of humps, 60
Which only the fisher looks grave at,
While round him like imps
Cling screaming the children as naked
And brown as his shrimps ;
Himself too as bare to the middle 65
—You see round his neck
The string and its brass coin suspended,
That saves him from wreck.
But to-day not a boat reached Salerno,
So back, to a man, 70

Came our friends, with whose help in the vineyards
 Grape-harvest began.
 In the vat, halfway up in our house-side,
 Like blood the juice spins,
 While your brother all bare-legged is dancing 75
 Till breathless he grins
 Dead-beaten in effort on effort
 To keep the grapes under,
 Since still when he seems all but master,
 In pours the fresh plunder 80
 From girls who keep coming and going
 With basket on shoulder,
 And eyes shut against the rain's driving ;
 Your girls that are older,—
 For under the hedges of aloe, 85
 And where, on its bed
 Of the orchard's black mould, the love-apple
 Lies pulpy and red,
 All the young ones are kneeling and filling
 Their laps with the snails 90
 Tempted out by this first rainy weather,—
 Your best of regales,
 As to-night will be proved to my sorrow,
 When, supping in state,
 We shall feast our grape-gleaners (two dozen, 95
 Three over one plate)
 With lasagne so tempting to swallow
 In slippery ropes,
 And gourds fried in great purple slices,
 That colour of popes. 100
 Meantime, see the grape bunch they've brought you :
 The rain-water slips
 O'er the heavy blue bloom on each globe
 Which the wasp to your lips
 Still follows with fretful persistence : 105
 Nay, taste, while awake,
 This half of a curd-white smooth cheese-ball
 That peels, flake by flake,

Like an onion, each smoother and whiter ;
Next, sip this weak wine 110
From the thin green glass flask, with its stopper,
A leaf of the vine ;
And end with the prickly-pear's red flesh
That leaves thro' its juice
The stony black seeds on your pearl-teeth. 115
Scirocco is loose !
Hark, the quick, whistling pelt of the olives
Which, thick in one's track,
Tempt the stranger to pick up and bite them,
Tho' not yet half black ! 120
How the old twisted olive trunks shudder,
The medlars let fall
Their hard fruit, and the brittle great fig-trees
Snap off, figs and all,
For here comes the whole of the tempest ! 125
No refuge, but creep
Back again to my side and my shoulder,
And listen or sleep.

O how will your country show next week,
When all the vine-boughs 130
Have been stripped of their foliage to pasture
The mules and the cows ?
Last eve, I rode over the mountains ;
Your brother, my guide,
Soon left me, to feast on the myrtles 135
That offered, each side,
Their fruit-balls, black, glossy and luscious,—
Or strip from the sorbs
A treasure, or, rosy and wondrous,
Those hairy gold orbs ! 140
But my mule picked his sure sober path out,
Just stopping to neigh
When he recognised down in the valley
His mates on their way

With the faggots and barrels of water ; 145
 And soon we emerged
 From the plain, where the woods could scarce follow ;
 And still as we urged
 Our way, the woods wondered, and left us,
 As up still we trudged 150
 Though the wild path grew wilder each instant,
 And place was e'en grudged
 'Mid the rock-chasms and piles of loose stones
 Like the loose broken teeth
 Of some monster which climbed there to die 155
 From the ocean beneath—
 Place was grudged to the silver-grey fume-weed
 That clung to the path,
 And dark rosemary ever a-dying
 That, 'spite the wind's wrath, 160
 So loves the salt rock's face to seaward,
 And lentisks as staunch
 To the stone where they root and bear berries,
 And . . . what shows a branch
 Coral-coloured, transparent, with circlets 165
 Of pale seagreen leaves ;
 Over all trod my mule with the caution
 Of gleaners o'er sheaves,
 Still, foot after foot like a lady,
 Till, round after round, 170
 He climbed to the top of Calvano,
 And God's own profound
 Was above me, and round me the mountains,
 And under, the sea,
 And within me my heart to bear witness 175
 What was and shall be.
 Oh, heaven and the terrible crystal !
 No rampart excludes
 Your eye from the life to be lived
 In the blue solitudes. 180
 Oh, those mountains, their infinite movement !
 Still moving with you ;

For, ever some new head and breast of them
 Thrusts into view
 To observe the intruder ; you see it 185
 If quickly you turn
 And, before they escape you surprise them.
 They grudge you should learn
 How the soft plains they look on, lean over
 And love (they pretend) 190
 —Cower beneath them, the flat sea-pine crouches,
 The wild fruit-trees bend,
 E'en the myrtle-leaves curl, shrink and shut :
 All is silent and grave :
 'Tis a sensual and timorous beauty, 195
 How fair ! but a slave.
 So, I turned to the sea ; and there slumbered
 As greenly as ever
 Those isles of the siren, your Galli ;
 No ages can sever 200
 The Three, nor enable their sister
 To join them,—halfway
 On the voyage, she looked at Ulysses—
 No farther to-day,
 Tho' the small one, just launched in the wave 205
 Watches breast-high and steady
 From under the rock, her bold sister
 Swum halfway already.
 Fortù, shall we sail there together
 And see from the sides 210
 Quite new rocks show their faces, new haunts
 Where the siren abides ?
 Shall we sail round and round them, close over
 The rocks, tho' unseen,
 That ruffle the grey glassy water 215
 To glorious green ?
 Then scramble from splinter to splinter,
 Reach land and explore,
 On the largest, the strange square black turret
 With never a door, 220

- Just a loop to admit the quick lizards ;
 Then, stand there and hear
 The birds' quiet singing, that tells us
 What life is, so clear ?
 —The secret they sang to Ulysses 225
 When, ages ago,
 He heard and he knew this life's secret
 I hear and I know.
- Ah, see ! The sun breaks o'er Calvano ;
 He strikes the great gloom 230
 And flutters it o'er the mount's summit
 In airy gold fume.
 All is over. Look out, see the gipsy,
 Our tinker and smith,
 Has arrived, set up bellows and forge, 235
 And down-squatted forthwith
 To his hammering, under the wall there ;
 One eye keeps aloof
 The urchins that itch to be putting
 His jews'-harps to proof, 240
 While the other, thro' locks of curled wire,
 Is watching how sleek
 Shines the hog, come to share in the windfall
 —Chew, abbot's own cheek !
 All is over. Wake up and come out now, 245
 And down let us go,
 And see the fine things got in order
 At church for the show
 Of the Sacrament, set forth this evening.
 To-morrow's the Feast 250
 Of the Rosary's Virgin, by no means
 Of Virgins the least,
 As you'll hear in the off-hand discourse
 Which (all nature, no art)
 The Dominican brother, these three weeks, 255
 Was getting by heart.

Not a pillar nor post but is dizen'd
 With red and blue papers ;
 All the roof waves with ribbons, each altar
 A-blaze with long tapers ; 260
 But the great masterpiece is the scaffold
 Rigged glorious to hold
 All the fiddlers and fifers and drummers
 And trumpeters bold,
 Not afraid of Bellini nor Auber, 265
 Who, when the priest's hoarse,
 Will strike us up something that's brisk
 For the feast's second course.
 And then will the flaxen-wigged Image
 Be carried in pomp 270
 Thro' the plain, while in gallant procession
 The priests mean to stomp.
 All round the glad church lie old bottles
 With gunpowder stopped,
 Which will be, when the Image re-enters, 275
 Religiously popped ;
 And at night from the crest of Calvano
 Great bonfires will hang,
 On the plain will the trumpets join chorus,
 And more poppers bang. 280
 At all events, come—to the garden
 As far as the wall ;
 See me tap with a hoe on the plaster
 Till out there shall fall
 A scorpion with wide angry nippers ! 285
 —"Such trifles !" you say ?
 Fortù, in my England at home,
 Men meet gravely to-day
 And debate, if abolishing Corn-laws
 Be righteous and wise 290
 —If 'twere proper, Scirocco should vanish
 In black from the skies !

"DE GUSTIBUS——"

I.

Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees
 (If our loves remain),
 In an English lane,
 By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
 Hark, those two in the hazel coppice— 5
 A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
 Making love, say,—
 The happier they!
 Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
 And let them pass, as they will too soon, 10
 With the bean-flowers' boon,
 And the blackbird's tune,
 And May, and June!

II.

What I love best in all the world
 Is a castle, precipice-encurled, 15
 In a gash of the wind-grieved Apennine.
 Or look for me, old fellow of mine
 (If I get my head from out the mouth
 O' the grave, and loose my spirit's bands,
 And come again to the land of lands),— 20
 In a sea-side house to the farther South,
 Where the baked cicala dies of drouth,
 And one sharp tree —'tis a cypress—stands,
 By the many hundred years red-rusted,
 Rough iron-spiked, ripe fruit-o'er-crusted, 25
 My sentinel to guard the sands
 To the water's edge. For, what expands
 Before the house, but the great opaque
 Blue breadth of sea without a break?
 While, in the house, for ever crumbles 30
 Some fragment of the frescoed walls,

From blisters where a scorpion sprawls.
 A girl bare-footed brings, and tumbles
 Down on the pavement, green-flesh melons,
 And says there's news to-day—the king 35
 Was shot at, touched in the liver-wing,
 Goes with his Bourbon arm in a sling:
 —She hopes they have not caught the felons.
 Italy, my Italy!
 Queen Mary's saying serves for me— 40
 (When fortune's malice
 Lost her—Calais)—
 Open my heart and you will see
 Graved inside of it, "Italy."
 Such lovers old are I and she : 45
 So it always was, so shall ever be!

BY THE FIRE-SIDE.

I.

How well I know what I mean to do
 When the long dark autumn-evenings come;
 And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
 With the music of all thy voices, dumb
 In life's November too! 5

II.

I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
 O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
 While the shutters flap as the cross-wind blows,
 And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
 Not verse now, only prose! 10

III.

Till the young ones whisper, finger on lip,
 " There he is at it, deep in Greek :
Now then, or never, out we slip
 To cut from the hazels by the creek
A mainmast for our ship ! " 15

IV.

I shall be at it indeed, my friends :
 Greek puts already on either side
Such a branch-work forth as soon extends
 To a vista opening far and wide,
And I pass out where it ends. 20

V.

The outside-frame, like your hazel-trees :
 But the inside-archway widens fast,
And a rarer sort succeeds to these,
 And we slope to Italy at last
And youth, by green degrees. 25

VI.

I follow wherever I am led,
 Knowing so well the leader's hand :
Oh woman-country, wooed not wed,
 Loved all the more by earth's male-lands,
Laid to their hearts instead ! 30

VII.

Look at the ruined chapel again
 Halfway up in the Alpine gorge !
Is that a tower, I point you plain,
 Or is it a mill, or an iron-forge
Breaks solitude in vain ? 35

VIII.

A turn, and we stand in the heart of things ;
 The woods are round us, heaped and dim ;
 From slab to slab how it slips and springs,
 The thread of water single and slim,
 Through the ravage some torrent brings ! 40

IX.

Does it feed the little lake below ?
 That speck of white just on its marge
 Is Pella ; see, in the evening-glow,
 How sharp the silver spear-heads charge
 When Alp meets heaven in snow ! 45

X.

On our other side is the straight-up rock ;
 And a path is kept 'twixt the gorge and it
 By boulder-stones where lichens mock
 The marks on a moth, and small ferns fit
 Their teeth to the polished block. 50

XI.

Oh the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers,
 And thorny balls, each three in one,
 The chestnuts throw on our path in showers !
 For the drop of the woodland fruit's begun,
 These early November hours. 55

XII.

That crimson the creeper's leaf across
 Like a splash of blood, intense, abrupt,
 O'er a shield else gold from rim to boss,
 And lay it for show on the fairy-cupped
 Elf-needled mat of moss, 60

XIII.

By the rose-flesh mushrooms, undivulged
Last evening—nay, in to-day's first dew
Yon sudden coral nipple bulged,
Where a freaked fawn-coloured flaky crew
Of toadstools peep indulged.

65

XIV.

And yonder, at foot of the fronting ridge
That takes the turn to a range beyond,
Is the chapel reached by the one-arched bridge
Where the water is stopped in a stagnant pond
Danced over by the midge.

70

XV.

The chapel and bridge are of stone alike,
Blackish-grey and mostly wet ;
Cut hemp-stalks steep in the narrow dyke.
See here again, how the lichens fret
And the roots of the ivy strike !

75

XVI.

Poor little place, where its one priest comes
On a festa-day, if he comes at all,
To the dozen folk from their scattered homes,
Gathered within that precinct small
By the dozen ways one roams—

80

XVII.

To drop from the charcoal-burners' huts,
Or climb from the hemp-dressers' low shed,
Leave the grange where the woodman stores his nuts,
Or the wattled cote where the fowlers spread
Their gear on the rock's bare juts.

85

XVIII.

It has some pretension too, this front,
With its bit of fresco half-moon-wise
Set over the porch, Art's early wont :
'Tis John in the Desert, I surmise,
But has borne the weather's brunt—

90

XIX.

Not from the fault of the builder, though,
For a pent-house properly projects
Where three carved beams make a certain show,
Dating—good thought of our architect's—
'Five, six, nine, he lets you know.

95

XX.

And all day long a bird sings there,
And a stray sheep drinks at the pond at times ;
The place is silent and aware ;
It has had its scenes, its joys and crimes,
But that is its own affair.

100

XXI.

My perfect wife, my Leonor,
Oh heart, my own, oh eyes, mine too,
Whom else could I dare look backward for,
With whom beside should I dare pursue
The path grey heads abhor ?

105

XXII.

For it leads to a crag's sheer edge with them ;
Youth, flowery all the way, there stops—
Not they ; age threatens and they contemn,
Till they reach the gulf wherein youth drops,
One inch from life's safe hem !

110

XXIII.

With me, youth led . . . I will speak now,
No longer watch you as you sit
Reading by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Mutely, my heart knows how—

115

XXIV.

When, if I think but deep enough,
You are wont to answer, prompt as rhyme ;
And you, too, find without rebuff
Response your soul seeks many a time
Piercing its fine flesh-stuff.

120

XXV.

My own, confirm me ! . If I tread
This path back, is it not in pride
To think how little I dreamed it led
To an age so blest that, by its side,
Youth seems the waste instead ?

125

XXVI.

My own, see where the years conduct !
At first, 'twas something our two souls
Should mix as mists do ; each is sucked
In each now : on, the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

130

XXVII.

Think, when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
[In the house not made with hands ?

135

XXVIII.

Oh I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before, in fine,
See and make me see, for your part,
New depths of the divine ! 140

XXIX.

But who could have expected this
When we two drew together first
Just for the obvious human bliss,
To satisfy life's daily thirst
With a thing men seldom miss ? 145

XXX.

Come back with me to the first of all,
Let us lean and love it over again,
Let us now forget and now recall,
Break the rosary in a pearly rain,
And gather what we let fall ! 150

XXXI.

What did I say ?—that a small bird sings
All day long, save when a brown pair
Of hawks from the wood float with wide wings
Strained to a bell : 'gainst noon-day glare
You count the streaks and rings. 155

XXXII.

But at afternoon or almost eve
'Tis better ; then the silence grows
To that degree you half believe
It must get rid of what it knows,
Its bosom does so heave. 160

XXXIII.

Hither we walked then, side by side,
Arm in arm and cheek to cheek,
And still I questioned or replied,
While my heart, convulsed to really speak,
Lay choking in its pride. 165

XXXIV.

Silent the crumbling bridge we cross,
And pity and praise the chapel sweet,
And care about the fresco's loss,
And wish for our souls a like retreat,
And wonder at the moss. 170

XXXV.

Stoop and kneel on the settle under,
Look through the window's grated square :
Nothing to see ! For fear of plunder,
The cross is down and the altar bare,
As if thieves don't fear thunder. 175

XXXVI.

We stoop and look in through the grate,
See the little porch and rustic door,
Read duly the dead builder's date ;
Then cross the bridge that we crossed before,
Take the path again—but wait ! 180

XXXVII.

Oh moment, one and infinite !
The water slips o'er stock and stone ;
The West is tender, hardly bright :
How grey at once is the evening grown—
One star, its chrysolite ! 185

XXXVIII.

We two stood there with never a third,
But each by each, as each knew well :
The sight we saw and the sounds we heard,
The lights and the shades made up a spell
Till the trouble grew and stirred. 190

XXXIX.

Oh, the little more, and how much it is !
And the little less, and what worlds away !
How a sound shall quicken content to bliss,
Or a breath suspend the blood's best play,
And life be a proof of this ! 195

XL.

Had she willed it, still had stood the screen
So slight, so sure, 'twixt my love and her :
I could fix her face with a guard between,
And find her soul as when friends confer,
Friends—lovers that might have been. 200

XLI.

For my heart had a touch of the woodland-time,
Wanting to sleep now over its best.
Shake the whole tree in the summer-prime,
But bring to the last leaf no such test !
" Hold the last fast ! " runs the rhyme. 205

XLII.

For a chance to make your little much,
To gain a lover and lose a friend,
Venture the tree and a myriad such,
When nothing you mar but the year can mend :
But a last leaf—fear to touch ! 210

XLIII.

Yet should it unfasten itself and fall
Eddying down till it find your face
At some slight wind—best chance of all !
Be your heart henceforth its dwelling-place
You trembled to forestall !

215

XLIV.

Worth how well, those dark grey eyes,
That hair so dark and dear, how worth
That a man should strive and agonise,
And taste a veriest hell on earth
For the hope of such a prize !

220

XLV.

You might have turned and tried a man,
Set him a space to weary and wear,
And prove which suited more your plan,
His best of hope or his worst despair,
Yet end as he began.

225

XLVI.

But you spared me this, like the heart you are,
And filled my empty heart at a word.
If two lives join, there is oft a scar.
They are one and one, with a shadowy third ;
One near one is too far.

230

XLVII.

A moment after, and hands unseen
Were hanging the night around us fast ;
But we knew that a bar was broken between
Life and life : we were mixed at last
In spite of the mortal screen.

235

XLVIII.

The forests had done it ; there they stood ;
We caught for a moment the powers at play :
They had mingled us so, for once and good,
Their work was done—we might go or stay,
They relapsed to their ancient mood. 240

XLIX.

How the world is made for each of us !
How all we perceive and know in it
Tends to some moment's product thus,
When a soul declares itself—to wit,
By its fruit, the thing it does ! 245

L.

Be hate that fruit or love that fruit,
It forwards the general deed of man,
And each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot. 250

LI.

I am named and known by that moment's feat ;
There took my station and degree ;
So grew my own small life complete.
As nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet ! 255

LII.

And to watch you sink by the fire-side now
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow,
And the spirit-small hand propping it,
Yonder, my heart knows how ! 260

LIII.

So, earth has gained by one man the more,
 And the gain of earth must be heaven's gain too ;
 And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
 When autumn comes : which I mean to do
 One day, as I said before.

265

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY.

I ONLY knew one poet in my life :
 And this, or something like it, was his way.

You saw go up and down Valladolid,
 A man of mark, to know next time you saw.
 His very serviceable suit of black 5
 Was courtly once and conscientious still,
 And many might have worn it, though none did :
 The cloak, that somewhat shone and showed the threads,
 Had purpose, and the ruff, significance.
 He walked and tapped the pavement with his cane, 10
 Scenting the world, looking it full in face,
 An old dog, bald and blindish, at his heels.
 They turned up, now, the alley by the church,
 That leads nowhither ; now, they breathed themselves
 On the main promenade just at the wrong time : 15
 You'd come upon his scrutinising hat,
 Making a peaked shade blacker than itself
 Against the single window spared some house
 Intact yet with its mouldered Moorish work,—
 Or else surprise the ferrel of his stick 20
 Trying the mortar's temper 'tween the chinks
 Of some new shop a-building, French and fine.
 He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
 The man who slices lemons into drink.

The coffee-roaster's brazier, and the boys 25
 That volunteer to help him turn its winch.
 He glanced o'er books on stalls with half an eye,
 And fly-leaf ballads on the vendor's string,
 And broad-edge bold-print posters by the wall.
 He took such cognisance of men and things, 30
 If any beat a horse, you felt he saw ;
 If any cursed a woman, he took note ;
 Yet stared at nobody,—you stared at him,
 And found, less to your pleasure than surprise,
 He seemed to know you and expect as much. 35
 So, next time that a neighbour's tongue was loosed,
 It marked the shameful and notorious fact,
 We had among us, not so much a spy,
 As a recording chief-inquisitor,
 The town's true master if the town but knew ! 40
 We merely kept a governor for form,
 While this man walked about and took account
 Of all thought, said and acted, then went home,
 And wrote it fully to our Lord the King
 Who has an itch to know things, he knows why, 45
 And reads them in his bedroom of a night.
 Oh, you might smile ! there wanted not a touch,
 A tang of . . . well, it was not wholly ease
 As back into your mind the man's look came.
 Stricken in years a little,—such a brow 50
 His eyes had to live under !—clear as flint
 On either side the formidable nose
 Curved, cut and coloured like an eagle's claw.
 Had he to do with A.'s surprising fate ?
 When altogether old B. disappeared 55
 And young C. got his mistress,—was't our friend,
 His letter to the King, that did it all ?
 What paid the bloodless man for so much pains ?
 Our Lord the King has favourites manifold,
 And shifts his ministry some once a month ; 60
 Our city gets new governors at whiles,—
 But never word or sign, that I could hear,

Notified to this man about the streets
 The King's approval of those letters conned
 The last thing duly at the dead of night. 65
 Did the man love his office? Frowned our Lord,
 Exhorting when none heard—"Beseech me not!
 Too far above my people,—beneath me!
 I set the watch,—how should the people know?
 Forget them, keep me all the more in mind!" 70
 Was some such understanding 'twixt the two?

I found no truth in one report at least—
 That if you tracked him to his home, down lanes
 Beyond the Jewry, and as clean to pace,
 You found he ate his supper in a room 75
 Blazing with lights, four Titians on the wall,
 And twenty naked girls to change his plate!
 Poor man, he lived another kind of life
 In that new stuccoed third house by the bridge,
 Fresh-painted, rather smart than otherwise! 80
 The whole street might o'erlook him as he sat,
 Leg crossing leg, one foot on the dog's back,
 Playing a decent cribbage with his maid
 (Jacynth, you're sure her name was) o'er the cheese
 And fruit, three red halves of starved winter-pears, 85
 Or treat of radishes in April. Nine,
 Ten, struck the church clock, straight to bed went he.

My father, like the man of sense he was,
 Would point him out to me a dozen times;
 "'St—'St," he'd whisper, "the Corregidor!" 90
 I had been used to think that personage
 Was one with lacquered breeches, lustrous belt,
 And feathers like a forest in his hat,
 Who blew a trumpet and proclaimed the news,
 Announced the bull-fights, gave each church its turn, 95
 And memorised the miracle in vogue!
 He had a great observance from us boys;
 We were in error; that was not the man.

I'd like now, yet had haply been afraid,
 To have just looked, when this man came to die, 100
 And seen who lined the clean gay garret-sides
 And stood about the neat low truckle-bed,
 With the heavenly manner of relieving guard.
 Here had been, mark, the general-in-chief,
 Thro' a whole campaign of the world's life and death, 105
 Doing the King's work all the dim day long,
 In his old coat and up to knees in mud,
 Smoked like a herring, dining on a crust,—
 And, now the day was won, relieved at once!
 No further show or need for that old coat, 110
 You are sure, for one thing! Bless us, all the while
 How sprucely we are dressed out, you and I!
 A second, and the angels alter that.
 Well, I could never write a verse,—could you?
 Let's to the Prado and make the most of time. 115

ANDREA DEL SARTO.

(CALLED "THE FAULTLESS PAINTER.")

BUT do not let us quarrel any more,
 No, my Lucrezia; bear with me for once:
 Sit down and all shall happen as you wish.
 You turn your face, but does it bring your heart?
 I'll work then for your friend's friend, never fear, 5
 Treat his own subject after his own way,
 Fix his own time, accept to his own price,
 And shut the money into this small hand
 When next it takes mine. Will it? tenderly?
 Oh, I'll content him,—but to-morrow, Love! 10
 I often am much wearier than you think,
 This evening more than usual, and it seems
 As if—forgive now—should you let me sit

Here by the window with your hand in mine
 And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole, 15
 Both of one mind, as married people use,
 Quietly, quietly the evening through,
 I might get up to-morrow to my work
 Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
 To-morrow, how you shall be glad for this! 20
 Your soft hand is a woman of itself,
 And mine the man's bared breast she curls inside.
 Don't count the time lost, neither; you must serve
 For each of the five pictures we require:
 It saves a model. So! keep looking so— 25
 My serpentine beauty, rounds on rounds!
 —How could you ever prick those perfect ears,
 Even to put the pearl there! oh, so sweet—
 My face, my moon, my everybody's moon,
 Which everybody looks on and calls his, 30
 And, I suppose, is looked on by in turn,
 While she looks—no one's: very dear, no less.
 You smile? why, there's my picture ready made,
 There's what we painters call our harmony!
 A common greyneess silvers everything,— 35
 All in a twilight, you and I alike
 —You, at the point of your first pride in me
 (That's gone you know),—but I, at every point;
 My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
 To yonder sober pleasant Fiesole. 40
 There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
 That length of convent-wall across the way
 Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
 The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
 And autumn grows, autumn in everything. 45
 Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
 As if I saw alike my work and self
 And all that I was born to be and do,
 A twilight-piece. Love, we are in God's hand.
 How strange now, looks the life he makes us lead; 50
 So free we seem, so fettered fast we are!

I feel he laid the fetter : let it lie !
 This chamber for example—turn your head—
 All that's behind us ! You don't understand
 Nor care to understand about my art, 55
 But you can hear at least when people speak :
 And that cartoon, the second from the door
 —It is the thing, Love ! so such things should be—
 Behold Madonna !—I am bold to say.
 I can do with my pencil what I know, 60
 What I see, what at bottom of my heart
 I wish for, if I ever wish so deep—
 Do easily, too—when I say, perfectly,
 I do not boast, perhaps : yourself are judge,
 Who listened to the Legate's talk last week, 65
 And just as much they used to say in France.
 At any rate 'tis easy, all of it !
 No sketches first, no studies, that's long past :
 I do what many dream of, all their lives,
 —Dream ? strive to do, and agonise to do, 70
 And fail in doing. I could count twenty such
 On twice your fingers, and not leave this town,
 Who strive—you don't know how the others strive
 To paint a little thing like that you smeared
 Carelessly passing with your robes afloat,— 75
 Yet do much less, so much less, Someone says,
 (I know his name, no matter)—so much less !
 Well, less is more, Lucrezia : I am judged.
 There burns a truer light of God in them,
 In their vexed beating stuffed and stopped-up brain, 80
 Heart, or whate'er else, than goes on to prompt
 This low-pulsed forthright craftsman's hand of mine.
 Their works drop groundward, but themselves, I know,
 Reach many a time a heaven that's shut to me,
 Enter and take their place there sure enough, 85
 Though they come back and cannot tell the world.
 My works are nearer heaven, but I sit here.
 The sudden blood of these men ! at a word—
 Praise them, it boils, or blame them, it boils too.

I, painting from myself and to myself, 90
 Know what I do, am unmoved by men's blame
 Or their praise either. Somebody remarks
 Morello's outline there is wrongly traced,
 His hue mistaken; what of that? or else,
 Rightly traced and well ordered; what of that? 95
 Speak as they please, what does the mountain care?
 Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp.
 Or what's a heaven for? All is silver-grey
 Placid and perfect with my art: the worse!
 I know both what I want and what might gain, 100
 And yet how profitless to know, to sigh
 "Had I been two, another and myself,
 Our head would have o'erlooked the world!" No doubt.
 Yonder's a work now, of that famous youth
 The Urbinate who died five years ago. 105
 ('Tis copied, George Vasari sent it me.)
 Well, I can fancy how he did it all,
 Pouring his soul, with kings and popes to see,
 Reaching, that heaven might so replenish him,
 Above and through his art—for it gives way; 110
 That arm is wrongly put—and there again—
 A fault to pardon in the drawing's lines,
 Its body, so to speak: its soul is right,
 He means right—that, a child may understand.
 Still, what an arm! and I could alter it: 115
 But all the play, the insight and the stretch—
 Out of me, out of me! And wherefore out?
 Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
 We might have risen to Rafael, I and you!
 Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think— 120
 More than I merit, yes, by many times.
 But had you—oh, with the same perfect brow,
 And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
 And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
 The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare— 125
 Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind!
 Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged

"God and the glory ! never care for gain.
 The present by the future, what is that ?
 Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo ! 130
 Rafael is waiting : up to God, all three ! "
 I might have done it for you. So it seems :
 Perhaps not. All is as God over-rules.
 Beside, incentives come from the soul's self ;
 The rest avail not. Why do I need you ? 135
 What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo ?
 In this world, who can do a thing, will not ;
 And who would do it, cannot, I perceive :
 Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—
 And thus we half-men struggle. At the end, 140
 God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.
 'Tis safer for me, if the award be strict,
 That I am something underrated here,
 Poor this long while, despised, to speak the truth
 I dared not, do you know, leave home all day, 145
 For fear of chancing on the Paris lords.
 The best is when they pass and look aside ;
 But they speak sometimes ; I must bear it all.
 Well may they speak ! That Francis, that first time,
 And that long festal year at Fontainebleau ! 150
 I surely then could sometimes leave the ground,
 Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,
 In that humane great monarch's golden look,—
 One finger in his beard or twisted curl
 Over his mouth's good mark that made the smile, 155
 One arm about my shoulder, round my neck,
 The jingle of his gold chain in my ear,
 I painting proudly with his breath on me,
 All his court round him, seeing with his eyes,
 Such frank French eyes, and such a fire of souls 160
 Profuse, my hand kept plying by those hearts,—
 And, best of all, this, this, this face beyond,
 This in the background, waiting on my work,
 To crown the issue with a last reward !
 A good time, was it not, my kingly days ? 165

And had you not grown restless . . . but I know—
 'Tis done and past; 'twas right, my instinct said;
 Too live the life grew, golden and not grey,
 And I'm the weak-eyed bat no sun should tempt
 Out of the grange whose four walls make his world. 170
 How could it end in any other way?

You called me, and I came home to your heart.
 The triumph was—to reach and stay there; since
 I reached it ere the triumph, what is lost?
 Let my hands frame your face in your hair's gold, 175
 You beautiful Lucrezia that are mine!

"Rafael did this, Andrea painted that;
 The Roman's is the better when you pray,
 But still the other's Virgin was his wife——"
 Men will excuse me. I am glad to judge 180
 Both pictures in your presence; clearer grows
 My better fortune, I resolve to think.

For, do you know, Lucrezia, as God lives,
 Said one day Agnolo, his very self,
 To Rafael . . . I have known it all these years . . . 185
 (When the young man was flaming out his thoughts
 Upon a palace-wall for Rome to see,
 Too lifted up in heart because of it)

"Friend, there's a certain sorry little scrub
 Goes up and down our Florence, none cares how, 190
 Who, were he set to plan and execute
 As you are, pricked on by your popes and kings,
 Would bring the sweat into that brow of yours!"
 To Rafael's!—And indeed the arm is wrong.

I hardly dare . . . yet, only you to see, 195
 Give the chalk here—quick, thus the line should go!
 Ay, but the soul! he's Rafael! rub it out!
 Still, all I care for, if he spoke the truth,
 (What he? why, who but Michel Agnolo?
 Do you forget already words like those?) 200

If really there was such a chance, so lost,—
 Is, whether you're—not grateful—but more pleased.
 Well, let me think so. And you smile indeed!

This hour has been an hour! Another smile?
 If you would sit thus by me every night 205
 I should work better, do you comprehend?
 I mean that I should earn more, give you more.
 See, it is settled dusk now; there's a star;
 Morello's gone, the watch-lights show the wall,
 The cue-owls speak the name we call them by. 210
 Come from the window, love,—come in, at last,
 Inside the melancholy little house
 We built to be so gay with. God is just.
 King Francis may forgive me: oft at nights
 When I look up from painting, eyes tired out, 215
 The walls become illumined, brick from brick
 Distinct, instead of mortar, fierce bright gold,
 That gold of his I did cement them with!
 Let us but love each other. Must you go?
 That Cousin here again? he waits outside? 220
 Must see you—you, and not with me? Those loans?
 More gaming debts to pay? you smiled for that?
 Well, let smiles buy me! have you more to spend?
 While hand and eye and something of a heart
 Are left me, work's my ware, and what's it worth? 225
 I'll pay my fancy. Only let me sit
 The grey remainder of the evening out,
 Idle, you call it, and muse perfectly
 How I could paint, were I but back in France,
 One picture, just one more—the Virgin's face, 230
 Not yours this time! I want you at my side
 To hear them—that is, Michel Agnolo—
 Judge all I do and tell you of its worth.
 Will you? To-morrow, satisfy your friend.
 I take the subjects for his corridor, 235
 Finish the portrait out of hand—there, there
 And throw him in another thing or two
 If he demurs; the whole should prove enough
 To pay for this same Cousin's freak. Beside,
 What's better and what's all I care about, 240
 Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff!

Love, does that please you? Ah, but what does he,
The Cousin! what does he to please you more?

I am grown peaceful as old age to-night.
I regret little, I would change still less. 245
Since there my past life lies, why alter it?
The very wrong to Francis!—it is true
I took his coin, was tempted and complied,
And built this house and sinned, and all is said.
My father and my mother died of want. 250
Well had I riches of my own? you see
How one gets rich! Let each one bear his lot.
They were born poor, lived poor, and poor they died:
And I have laboured somewhat in my time
And not been paid profusely. Some good son 255
Paint my two hundred pictures—let him try!
No doubt, there's something strikes a balance. Yes,
You loved me quite enough, it seems to-night.
This must suffice me here. What would one have?
In heaven, perhaps, new chances, one more chance— 260
Four great walls in the New Jerusalem,
Meted on each side by the angel's reed,
For Leonard, Rafael, Agnolo and me
To cover—the three first without a wife,
While I have mine! So—still they overcome 265
Because there's still Lucrezia,—as I choose.

Again the Cousin's whistle! Go, my Love.

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
 That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry,
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending
 Thy flight, mayst see another child for tending,
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

5

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
 From where thou standest now, to where I gaze,
 —And suddenly my head is covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child who prays
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

10

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
 Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

15

20

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest
 My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
 Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,
 Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
 Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
 Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
 And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

25

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !
 I think how I should view the earth and skies 30
 And sea, when once again my brow was bared
 After thy healing, with such different eyes.
 O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
 And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.
 What further may be sought for or declared ? 35

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach
 (Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
 Holding the little hands up, each to each
 Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away 40
 Over the earth where so much lay before him
 Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
 And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content 45
 —My angel with me too : and since I care
 For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent)—

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly 50
 At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
 I took one thought his picture struck from me,
 And spread it out, translating it to song.
 My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend ?
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end ? 55
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL,

SHORTLY AFTER THE REVIVAL OF LEARNING IN EUROPE.

LET us begin and carry up this corpse,
 Singing together.
 Leave we the common crofts, the vulgar thorpes
 Each in its tether
 Sleeping safe on the bosom of the plain, 5
 Cared-for till cock-crow :
 Look out if yonder be not day again
 Rimming the rock-row !
 That's the appropriate country ; there, man's thought,
 Rarer, intenser, 10
 Self-gathered for an outbreak, as it ought,
 Chafes in the censer.
 Leave we the unlettered plain its herd and crop ;
 Seek we sepulture
 On a tall mountain, citied to the top, 15
 Crowded with culture !
 All the peaks soar, but one the rest excels ;
 Clouds overcome it ;
 No ! yonder sparkle is the citadel's
 Circling its summit. 20
 Thither our path lies ; wind we up the heights :
 Wait ye the warning ?
 Our low life was the level's and the night's ;
 He's for the morning.
 Step to a tune, square chests, erect each head, 25
 'Ware the beholders !
 This is our master, famous calm and dead,
 Borne on our shoulders.
 Sleep, crop and herd ! sleep, darkling thorpe and croft,
 Safe from the weather ! 30
 He, whom we convoy to his grave aloft,
 Singing together,
 He was a man born with thy face and throat,
 Lyric Apollo !

Long he lived nameless : how should spring take note 35
 Winter would follow ?
 Till lo, the little touch, and youth was gone !
 Cramped and diminished,
 Moaned he, "New measures, other feet anon !
 My dance is finished ?" 40
 No, that's the world's way : (keep the mountain-side,
 Make for the city !)
 He knew the signal, and stepped on with pride
 Over men's pity ;
 Left play for work, and grappled with the world 45
 Bent on escaping :
 "What's in the scroll," quoth he, "thou keepest furled ?
 Show me their shaping,
 Theirs who most studied man, the bard and sage,—
 Give !" —So, he gowned him, 50
 Straight got by heart that book to its last page :
 Learned, we found him.
 Yea, but we found him bald too, eyes like lead,
 Accents uncertain :
 "Time to taste life," another would have said, 55
 "Up with the curtain !"
 This man said rather, "Actual life comes next ?
 Patience a moment !
 Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
 Still there's the comment. 60
 Let me know all ! Prate not of most or least,
 Painful or easy !
 Even to the crumbs I'd fain eat up the feast,
 Ay, nor feel queasy."
 Oh, such a life as he resolved to live, 65
 When he had learned it,
 When he had gathered all books had to give !
 Sooner, he spurned it.
 Image the whole, then execute the parts—
 Fancy the fabric 70
 Quite, ere you build, ere steel strike fire from quartz,
 Ere mortar dab brick !

(Here's the town-gate reached: there's the market-place Gaping before us.)	
Yea, this in him was the peculiar grace	75
(Hearten our chorus!)	
That before living he'd learn how to live— No end to learning:	
Earn the means first—God surely will contrive Use for our earning.	80
Others mistrust and say, "But time escapes: Live now or never!"	
He said, "What's time? Leave Now for dogs and apes! Man has Forever."	
Back to his book then: deeper drooped his head:	85
<i>Calculus</i> racked him:	
Leadens before, his eyes grew dross of lead: <i>Trussis</i> attacked him.	
"Now, master, take a little rest!"—not he! (Caution redoubled,	90
Step two abreast, the way winds narrowly!)	
Not a whit troubled	
Back to his studies, fresher than at first, Fierce as a dragon	
He (soul-hydroptic with a sacred thirst)	95
Sucked at the flagon.	
Oh, if we draw a circle premature, Heedless of far gain,	
Greedy for quick returns of profit, sure	100
Bad is our bargain!	
Was it not great? did not he throw on God, (He loves the burthen)—	
God's task to make the heavenly period Perfect the earthen?	105
Did not he magnify the mind, show clear Just what it all meant?	
He would not discount life, as fools do here, Paid by instalment.	
He ventured neck or nothing—heaven's success Found, or earth's failure:	110

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT
SAINT PRAXED'S CHURCH.

ROME, 15—.

VANITY, saith the preacher, vanity !
 Draw round my bed : is Anselm keeping back ?
 Nephews—sons mine . . . ah God, I know not ! Well—
 She, men would have to be your mother once,
 Old Gandolf envied me, so fair she was ! 5
 What's done is done, and she is dead beside,
 Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since,
 And as she died so must we die ourselves,
 And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.
 Life, how and what is it ? As here I lie 10
 In this state-chamber, dying by degrees,
 Hours and long hours in the dead of night, I ask
 "Do I live, am I dead ?" Peace, peace seems all.
 Saint Praxed's ever was the church for peace ;
 And so, about this tomb of mine. I fought 15
 With tooth and nail to save my niche, ye know :
 —Old Gandolf cozened me, despite my care ;
 Shrewd was that snatch from out the corner South
 He graced his carrion with, God curse the same !
 Yet still my niche is not so cramped but thence 20
 One sees the pulpit o' the epistle-side,
 And somewhat of the choir, those silent seats,
 And up into the aery dome where live
 The angels, and a sunbeam's sure to lurk :
 And I shall fill my slab of basalt there, 25
 And 'neath my tabernacle take my rest,
 With those nine columns round me, two and two,
 The odd one at my feet where Anselm stands :
 Peach-blossom marble all, the rare, the ripe
 As fresh-poured red wine of a mighty pulse. 30
 —Old Gandolf with his paltry onion-stone,
 Put me where I may look at him ! True peach,

Rosy and flawless: how I earned the prize!
 Draw close: that conflagration of my church
 —What then? So much was saved if aught were missed! 35
 My sons, ye would not be my death? Go dig
 The white-grape vineyard where the oil-press stood
 Drop water gently till the surface sink,
 And if ye find . . . Ah God, I know not, I! . . .
 Bedded in store of rotten fig-leaves soft, 40
 And corded up in a tight olive-frail,
 Some lump, ah God, of *lapis lazuli*,
 Big as a Jew's head cut off at the nape,
 Blue as a vein o'er the Madonna's breast . . .
 Sons, all have I bequeathed you, villas, all, 45
 That brave Frascati villa with its bath,
 So, let the blue lump poise between my knees,
 Like God the Father's globe on both his hands
 Ye worship in the Jesu Church so gay,
 For Gandolf shall not choose but see and burst! 50
 Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:
 Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?
 Did I say basalt for my slab, sons? Black—
 'Twas ever antique-black I meant! How else
 Shall ye contrast my frieze to come beneath? 55
 The bas-relief in bronze ye promised me,
 Those Pans and Nymphs ye wot of, and perchance
 Some tripod, thyrsus, with a vase or so,
 The Saviour at his sermon on the mount,
 Saint Praxed in a glory, and one Pan 60
 Ready to twitch the Nymph's last garment off,
 And Moses with the tables . . . but I know
 Ye mark me not! What do they whisper thee,
 Child of my bowels, Anselm? Ah, ye hope
 To revel down my villas while I gasp 65
 Bricked o'er with beggar's mouldy travertine
 Which Gandolf from his tomb-top chuckles at!
 Nay, boys, ye love me—all of jasper, then!
 'Tis jasper ye stand pledged to, lest I grieve
 'y bath must needs be left behind, alas! 70

One block, pure green as a pistachio-nut,
 There's plenty jasper somewhere in the world—
 And have I not Saint Praxed's ear to pray
 Horses for ye, and brown Greek manuscripts,
 And mistresses with great smooth marbly limbs ? 75
 —That's if ye carve my epitaph aright,
 Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,
 No gaudy ware like Gandolf's second line—
 Tully, my masters ? Ulpian serves his need !
 And then how I shall lie through centuries, 80
 And hear the blessed mutter of the mass,
 And see God made and eaten all day long,
 And feel the steady candle-flame, and taste
 Good strong thick stupefying incense-smoke !
 For as I lie here, hours of the dead night, 85
 Dying in state and by such slow degrees,
 I fold my arms as if they clasped a crook,
 And stretch my feet forth straight as stone can point,
 And let the bedclothes, for a mortcloth, drop
 Into great laps and folds of sculptor's-work : 90
 And as yon tapers dwindle, and strange thoughts
 Grow, with a certain humming in my ears,
 About the life before I lived this life,
 And this life too, popes, cardinals and priests,
 Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount, 95
 Your tall pale mother with her talking eyes,
 And new-found agate urns as fresh as day,
 And marble's language, Latin pure, discreet,
 —Aha, ELUCESCEBAT quoth our friend ?
 No Tully, said I, Ulpian at the best ! 100
 Evil and brief hath been my pilgrimage.
 All *lapis*, all, sons ! Else I give the Popo
 My villas ! Will ye ever eat my heart ?
 Ever your eyes were as a lizard's quick,
 They glitter like your mother's for my soul, 105
 Or ye would heighten my impoverished frieze,
 Piece out its starved design, and fill my vase
 With grapes, and add a vizor and a Term,

And to the tripod ye would tie a lynx
 That in his struggle throws the thyrsus down, 110
 To comfort me on my entablature
 Whereon I am to lie till I must ask
 "Do I live, am I dead?" There, leave me, there !
 For ye have stabbed me with ingratitude
 To death—ye wish it—God, ye wish it ! Stone— 115
 Gritstone, a-crumble ! Clammy squares which sweat
 As if the corpse they keep were oozing through—
 And no more *lapis* to delight the world !
 Well go ! I bless ye. Fewer tapers there,
 But in a row : and, going, turn your backs 120
 —Ay, like departing altar-ministrants,
 And leave me in my church, the church for peace,
 That I may watch at leisure if he leers—
 Old Gandolf, at me, from his onion-stone,
 As still he envied me, so fair she was ! 125

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF
 KARSHISH, THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
 The not-incurious in God's handiwork
 (This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
 Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
 To coop up and keep down on earth a space 5
 That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
 —To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
 Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
 Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
 Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain, 10
 Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
 Back and rejoin its source before the term,—

And aptest in contrivance (under God)
 To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
 The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home 15
 Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
 Three samples of true snakestone—rarer still,
 One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
 (But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
 And writeth now the twenty-second time. 20

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :
 Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
 Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?
 I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone
 On many a flinty furlong of this land. 25
 Also, the country-side is all on fire
 With rumours of a marching hitherward :
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear ;
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls : 30
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy ;
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night, 35
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip 40
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
 A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots of : there's a spider here 45
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
 The Syrian runagate I trust this to ?

His service payeth me a sublimate 50
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth 55
 Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy—
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar— 60
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay : my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush, 65
 What set me off a-writing first of all.
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
 The Man had something in the look of him—
 His case has struck me far more than 'tis worth. 70
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose
 In the great press of novelty at hand
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth ? 75
 The very man is gone from me but now,
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all !

'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point 80
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days :
 When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 'twere well to know,
 The evil thing out-breaking all at once 85

Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe
 Whatever it was minded on the wall 90
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
 The just-returned and new-established soul
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart 95
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
 That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
 —That he was dead and then restored to life
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe : 100
 —'Sayeth, the same bade "Rise," and he did rise.
 "Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
 Not so this figment!—not, that such a fume,
 Instead of giving way to time and health,
 Should eat itself into the life of life, 105
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones and all!
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 The body's habit wholly laudable, 110
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to show.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep ! 115
 Whence has the man the balm that brightens all?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child,
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke, 120
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,

Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
 And that's a sample how his years must go. 125
 Look, if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
 With straitened habits and with tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things, 130
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ? 135
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty— 140
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much. 145
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments
 Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
 'Tis one ! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt 150
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point) 155
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness, 160
 Or pretermission of the daily craft !

While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand 165
 The reason why—" 'tis but a word," object—
 "A gesture"—he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind?) when, being young,
 We both would unadvisedly recite 170
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both 175
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know!
 He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
 (It is the life to lead perforce)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb 180
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life:
 The law of that is known to him as this,
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here 185
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
 "It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be." 190
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him "Rise" and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
 Admonishes: then back he sinks at once 195
 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,

Professedly the faultier that he knows 200
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last 205
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth :
 He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please. 210
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do : 215
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction ? Ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
 "Be it as God please" reassureth him.
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should : 220
 "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once ?"
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me. 225
 The man is apathetic, you deduce ?
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes
 And birds—how say I ? flowers of the field—
 As a wise workman recognises tools 230
 In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
 An indignation which is promptly curbed :
 As when in certain travel I have feigned
 To be an ignoramus in our art

According to some preconceived design,
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners
 Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance, 240
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source, 245
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule 250
 And creed prodigious as described to me.
 His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
 To occult learning in our lord the sage
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone) 255
 Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
 The other imputations must be lies: 260
 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.
 (And after all, our patient Lazarus
 Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
 Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech 265
 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case.)
 This man so cured regards the curer, then,
 As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world,
 That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile! 270
 —'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,

And must have so avouched himself, in fact, 275
 In hearing of this very Lazarus
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price
 Calling at every moment for remark ?
 I noticed on the margin of a pool 280
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth ! 285
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ
 Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus : 290
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
 A moon made like a face with certain spots
 Multiform, manifold and menacing :
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met 295
 In this old sleepy town at unaware,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose,
 Or steal, or give it thee with equal good. 300
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
 So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too— 305
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, " O heart I made, a heart beats here !
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
 Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
 But love I gave thee, with myself to love, 310
 And thou must love me who have died for thee ! "
 The madmen saith He said so : it is strange.

CLEON.

"As certain also of your own poets have said"—

CLEON the poet (from the sprinkled isles,
 Lily on lily, that o'erlace the sea,
 And laugh their pride when the light wave lisps
 "Greece")—
 To Protus in his Tyranny : much health !

They give thy letter to me, even now :	5
I read and seem as if I heard thee speak.	
The master of thy galley still unlades	
Gift after gift ; they block my court at last	
And pile themselves along its portico	
Royal with sunset, like a thought of thee :	10
And one white she-slave from the group dispersed	
Of black and white slaves (like the chequer-work	
Pavement, at once my nation's work and gift,	
Now covered with this settle-down of doves),	
One lyric woman, in her crocus vest	15
Woven of sea-wools, with her two white hands	
Commends to me the strainer and the cup	
Thy lip hath bettered ere it blesses mine.	

Well-counselled, king, in thy munificence !	
For so shall men remark, in such an act	20
Of love for him whose song gives life its joy,	
Thy recognition of the use of life ;	
Nor call thy spirit barely adequate	
To help on life in straight ways, broad enough	
For vulgar souls, by ruling and the rest.	25
Thou, in the daily building of thy tower,—	
Whether in fierce and sudden spasms of toil,	
Or through dim lulls of unapparent growth,	
Or when the general work 'mid good acclaim	
Climbed with the eye to cheer the architect,—	30

Didst ne'er engage in work for mere work's sake—
 Hadst ever in thy heart the luring hope
 Of some eventual rest a-top of it,
 Whence, all the tumult of the building hushed,
 Thou first of men mightst look out to the East : 35
 The vulgar saw thy tower, thou sawest the sun.
 For this, I promise on thy festival
 To pour libation, looking o'er the sea,
 Making this slave narrate thy fortunes, speak
 Thy great words, and describe thy royal face— 40
 Wishing thee wholly where Zeus lives the most,
 Within the eventual element of calm.

Thy letter's first requirement meets me here.
 It is as thou hast heard : in one short life
 I, Cleon, have effected all those things 45
 Thou wonderingly dost enumerate.
 That epos on thy hundred plates of gold
 Is mine,—and also mine the little chant,
 So sure to rise from every fishing-bark
 When, lights at prow, the seamen haul their net. 50
 The image of the sun-god on the phare,
 Men turn from the sun's self to see, is mine ;
 The Pœcile, o'er-storied its whole length,
 As thou didst hear, with painting, is mine too.
 I know the true proportions of a man 55
 And woman also, not observed before ;
 And I have written three books on the soul,
 Proving absurd all written hitherto,
 And putting us to ignorance again.
 For music,—why, I have combined the moods, 60
 Inventing one. In brief, all arts are mine ;
 Thus much the people know and recognise,
 Throughout our seventeen islands. Marvel not.
 We of these latter days, with greater mind
 Than our forerunners, since more composite, 65
 Look not so great, beside their simple way,
 To a judge who only sees one way at once,

One mind-point and no other at a time,—
 Compares the small part of a man of us
 With some whole man of the heroic age, 70
 Great in his way—not ours, nor meant for ours.
 And ours is greater, had we skill to know :
 For, what we call this life of men on earth,
 This sequence of the soul's achievements here
 Being as I find much reason to conceive, 75
 Intended to be viewed eventually
 As a great whole, not analysed to parts,
 But each part having reference to all,—
 How shall a certain part, pronounced complete,
 Endure effacement by another part ? 80
 Was the thing done ?—then, what's to do again ?
 See, in the chequered pavement opposite,
 Suppose the artist made a perfect rhomb,
 And next a lozenge, then a trapezoid—
 He did not overlay them, superimpose 85
 The new upon the old and blot it out,
 But laid them on a level in his work,
 Making at last a picture ; there it lies,
 So, first the perfect separate forms were made,
 The portions of mankind ; and after, so, 90
 Occurred the combination of the same.
 For where had been a progress, otherwise ?
 Mankind, made up of all the single men,—
 In such a synthesis the labour ends.
 Now mark me ! those divine men of old time 95
 Have reached, thou sayest well, each at one point
 The outside verge that rounds our faculty ;
 And where they reached, who can do more than reach ?
 It takes but little water just to touch
 At some one point the inside of a sphere, 100
 And, as we turn the sphere, touch all the rest
 In due succession : but the finer air
 Which not so palpably nor obviously,
 Though no less universally, can touch
 The whole circumference of that emptied sphere, 105

Fills it more fully than the water did ;
 Holds thrice the weight of water in itself
 Resolved into a subtler element.
 And yet the vulgar call the sphere first full
 Up to the visible height—and after, void ; 110
 Not knowing air's more hidden properties.
 And thus our soul, misknown, cries out to Zeus
 To vindicate his purpose in our life :
 Why stay we on the earth unless to grow ?
 Long since, I imaged, wrote the fiction out, 115
 That he or other god descended here
 And, once for all, showed simultaneously
 What, in its nature, never can be shown,
 Piecemeal or in succession ;—showed, I say,
 The worth both absolute and relative 120
 Of all his children from the birth of time,
 His instruments for all appointed work.
 I now go on to image,—might we hear
 The judgment which should give the due to each,
 Show where the labour lay and where the ease, 125
 And prove Zeus' self, the latent everywhere !
 This is a dream :—but no dream, let us hope,
 That years and days, the summers and the springs,
 Follow each other with unwaning powers.
 The grapes which dye thy wine are richer far, 130
 Through culture, than the wild wealth of the rock ;
 The suave plum than the savage-tasted drupe ;
 The pastured honey-bee drops choicer sweet ;
 The flowers turn double, and the leaves turn flowers ;
 That young and tender crescent-moon, thy slave, 135
 Sleeping above her robe as buoyed by clouds,
 Refines upon the women of my youth.
 What, and the soul alone deteriorates ?
 I have not chanted verse like Homer, no—
 Nor swept string like Terpander, no—nor carved 140
 And painted men like Phidias and his friend :
 I am not great as they are, point by point.
 But I have entered into sympathy

With these four, running these into one soul,
 Who, separate, ignored each other's art. 145
 Say, is it nothing that I know them all?
 The wild flower was the larger; I have dashed
 Rose-blood upon its petals, pricked its cup's
 Honey with wine, and driven its seed to fruit,
 And show a better flower if not so large : 150
 I stand myself. Refer this to the gods
 Whose gift alone it is! which, shall I dare
 (All pride apart) upon the absurd pretext
 That such a gift by chance lay in my hand,
 Discourse of lightly or depreciate? 155
 It might have fallen to another's hand : what then?
 I pass too surely : let at least truth stay !

And next, of what thou followest on to ask.
 This being with me as I declare, O king,
 My works, in all these varicoloured kinds, 160
 So done by me, accepted so by men—
 Thou askest, if (my soul thus in men's hearts)
 I must not be accounted to attain
 The very crown and proper end of life?
 Inquiring thence how, now life closeth up, 165
 I face death with success in my right hand :
 Whether I fear death less than dost thyself
 The fortunate of men? "For" (writest thou)
 "Thou leavest much behind, while I leave nought.
 Thy life stays in the poems men shall sing, . 170
 The pictures men shall study; while my life,
 Complete and whole now in its power and joy,
 Dies altogether with my brain and arm,
 Is lost indeed; since, what survives myself?
 The brazen statue to o'erlook my grave, 175
 Set on the promontory which I named.
 And that—some supple courtier of my heir
 Shall use its robed and sceptred arm, perhaps,
 To fix the rope to, which best drags it down.
 I go then : triumph thou, who dost not go!" 180

Nay, thou art worthy of hearing my whole mind.
 Is this apparent, when thou turn'st to muse
 Upon the scheme of earth and man in chief,
 That admiration grows as knowledge grows ?
 That imperfection means perfection hid, 185
 Reserved in part, to grace the after-time ?
 If, in the morning of philosophy,
 Ere aught had been recorded, nay perceived,
 Thou, with the light now in thee, couldst have looked
 On all earth's tenantry, from worm to bird, 190
 Ere man, her last, appeared upon the stage—
 Thou wouldst have seen them perfect, and deduced
 The perfectness of others yet unseen.
 Conceding which,—had Zeus then questioned thee
 "Shall I go on a step, improve on this, 195
 Do more for visible creatures than is done ?"
 Thou wouldst have answered, "Ay, by making each
 Grow conscious in himself—by that alone.
 All's perfect else : the shell sucks fast the rock,
 The fish strikes through the sea, the snake both swims 200
 And slides, forth range the beasts, the birds take flight,
 Till life's mechanics can no further go—
 And all this joy in natural life is put
 Like fire from off thy finger into each,
 So exquisitely perfect is the same. 205
 But 'tis pure fire, and they mere matter are ;
 It has them, not they it : and so I choose
 For man, thy last premeditated work
 (If I might add a glory to the scheme)
 That a third thing should stand apart from both, 210
 A quality arise within his soul,
 Which, intro-active, made to supervise
 And feel the force it has, may view itself,
 And so be happy." Man might live at first
 The animal life : but is there nothing more ? 215
 In due time, let him critically learn
 How he lives ; and, the more he gets to know
 Of his own life's adaptabilities,

The more joy-giving will his life become.
Thus man, who hath this quality, is best. 220

But thou, king, hadst more reasonably said :
“ Let progress end at once,—man make no step
Beyond the natural man, the better beast;
Using his senses, not the sense of sense.”
In man there's failure, only since he left 225
(The lower and unconscious forms of life.
We called it an advance, the rendering plain
Man's spirit might grow conscious of man's life,
And, by new lore so added to the old,
Take each step higher over the brute's head. 230
This grew the only life, the pleasure-house,
Watch-tower and treasure-fortress of the soul,
Which whole surrounding flats of natural life
Seemed only fit to yield subsistence to ;
A tower that crowns a country. But alas, 235
The soul now climbs it just to perish there !
For thence we have discovered ('tis no dream—
We know this, which we had not else perceived)
That there's a world of capability
For joy, spread round about us, meant for us, 240
Inviting us ; and still the soul craves all,
And still the flesh replies, “ Take no jot more
Than ere thou clombst the tower to look abroad !
Nay, so much less as that fatigue has brought
Deduction to it.” We struggle, fain to enlarge 245
Our bounded physical reciprocity,
Increase our power, supply fresh oil to life,
Repair the waste of age and sickness : no,
It skills not ! life's inadequate to joy,
As the soul sees joy, tempting life to take. 250
They praise a fountain in my garden here
Wherein a Naiad sends the water-bow
Thin from her tube ; she smiles to see it rise.
What if I told her, it is just a thread
From that great river which the hills shut up, 255

And mock her with my leave to take the same ?
 The artificer has given her one small tube
 Past power to widen or exchange—what boots
 To know she might spout oceans if she could ?
 She cannot lift beyond her first thin thread : 260
 And so a man can use but a man's joy
 While he sees God's. Is it for Zeus to boast,
 "See, man, how happy I live, and despair—
 That I may be still happier—for thy use !"

If this were so, we could not thank our lord, 265
 As hearts beat on to doing ; 'tis not so—
 Malice it is not. Is it carelessness ?
 Still, no. If care—where is the sign ? I ask,
 And get no answer, and agree in sum,
 O king, with thy profound discouragement, 270
 Who seest the wider but to sigh the more.
 Most progress is most failure : thou sayest well.

The last point now :—thou dost except a case—
 Holding joy not impossible to one
 With artist-gifts—to such a man as I 275
 Who leave behind me living works indeed ;
 For, such a poem, such a painting lives.
 What ? dost thou verily trip upon a word,
 Confound the accurate view of what joy is
 (Caught somewhat clearer by my eyes than thine) 280
 With feeling joy ? confound the knowing how
 And showing how to live (my faculty)
 With actually living ?—Otherwise
 Where is the artist's vantage o'er the king ?
 Because in my great epos I display 285
 How divers men young, strong, fair, wise, can act—
 Is this as though I acted ? if I paint,
 Carve the young Phœbus, am I therefore young ?
 Methinks I'm older that I bowed myself
 The many years of pain that taught me art ! 290
 Indeed, to know is something, and to prove
 How all this beauty might be enjoyed, is more :

But, knowing nought, to enjoy is something too.
 Yon rower, with the moulded muscles there,
 Lowering the sail, is nearer it than I. 295
 I can write love-odes : thy fair slave's an ode.
 I get to sing of love, when grown too grey
 For being beloved : she turns to that young man,
 The muscles all a-ripple on his back.
 I know the joy of kingship : well, thou art king ! 300

“ But,” sayest thou—(and I marvel, I repeat,
 To find thee trip on such a mere word) “ what
 Thou writest, paintest, stays ; that does not die :
 Sappho survives, because we sing her songs,
 And Æschylus, because we read his plays ! ” 305
 Why, if they live still, let them come and take
 Thy slave in my despite, drink from thy cup,
 Speak in my place. Thou diest while I survive ?
 Say rather that my fate is deadlier still,
 In this, that every day my sense of joy 310
 Grows more acute, my soul (intensified
 By power and insight) more enlarged, more keen ;
 While every day my hairs fall more and more,
 My hand shakes, and the heavy years increase—
 The horror quickening still from year to year, 315
 The consummation coming past escape
When I shall know most, and yet least enjoy—
 When all my works wherein I prove my worth,
 Being present still to mock me in men's mouths,
 Alive still, in the praise of such as thou, 320
 I, I the feeling, thinking, acting man,
 The man who loved his life so over-much,
 Sleep in my urn. It is so horrible,
 I dare at times imagine to my need
 Some future state revealed to us by Zeus, 325
 Unlimited in capability
 For joy, as this is in desire for joy,
 —To seek which, the joy-hunger forces us :
 That, stung by straitness of our life, made strait

On purpose to make prized the life at large— 330
 Freed by the throbbing impulse we call death,
 We burst there as the worm into the fly,
 Who, while a worm still, wants his wings. But no !
 Zeus has not yet revealed it ; and alas,
 He must have done so, were it possible ! 335

Live long and happy, and in that thought die :
 Glad for what was ! Farewell. And for the rest,
 I cannot tell thy messenger aright
 Where to deliver what he bears of thine
 To one called Paulus ; we have heard his fame 340
 Indeed, if Christus be not one with him—
 I know not, nor am troubled much to know.
 Thou canst not think a mere barbarian Jew
 As Paulus proves to be, one circumcised,
 Hath access to a secret shut from us ? 345
 Thou wrongest our philosophy, O king,
 In stooping to inquire of such an one,
 As if his answer could impose at all !
 He writeth, doth he ? well, and he may write.
 Oh, the Jew findeth scholars ! certain slaves 350
 Who touched on this same isle, preached him and Christ ;
 And (as I gathered from a bystander)
 Their doctrine could be held by no sane man.

“CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK
 TOWER CAME.”

(See Edgar's song in “LEAR.”)

I.

My first thought was, he lied in every word,
 That hoary cripple, with malicious eye
 Askance to watch the working of his lie

On mine, and mouth scarce able to afford
 Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored 5
 Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby.

II.

What else should he be set for, with his staff?
 What, save to waylay with his lies, ensnare
 All travellers who might find him posted there,
 And ask the road? I guessed what skull-like laugh 10
 Would break, what crutch 'gin write my epitaph
 For pastime in the dusty thoroughfare,

III.

If at his counsel I should turn aside
 Into that ominous tract which, all agree,
 Hides the Dark Tower. Yet acquiescingly 15
 I did turn as he pointed: neither pride
 Nor hope rekindling at the end descried,
 So much as gladness that some end might be.

IV.

For, what with my whole world-wide wandering,
 What with my search drawn out thro' years, my 20
 hope
 Dwindled into a ghost not fit to cope
 With that obstreperous joy success would bring,—
 I hardly tried now to rebuke the spring
 My heart made, finding failure in its scope.

V.

As when a sick man very near to death 25
 Seems dead indeed, and feels begin and end
 The tears and takes the farewell of each friend,
 And hears one bid the other go, draw breath
 Freelier outside, ("Since all is o'er," he saith,
 "And the blow fallen no grieving can amend;" 30

VI.

While some discuss if near the other graves
Be room enough for this, and when a day
Suits best for carrying the corpse away,
With care about the banners, scarves and staves :
And still the man hears all, and only craves 35
He may not shame such tender love and stay.

VII.

Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
So many times among "The Band"—to wit,
The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed 40
Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
And all the doubt was now—should I be fit?

VIII.

So, quiet as despair, I turned from him,
That hateful cripple, out of his highway
Into the path he pointed. All the day 45
Had been a dreary one at best, and dim
Was settling to its close, yet shot one grim
Red leer to see the plain catch its estray.

IX.

For mark ! no sooner was I fairly found
Pledged to the plain, after a pace or two, 50
Than, pausing to throw backward a last view
O'er the safe road, 'twas gone ; grey plain all round :
Nothing but plain to the horizon's bound.
I might go on ; nought else remained to do.

X.

So, on I went. I think I never saw 55
Such starved ignoble nature ; nothing throve :
For flowers—as well expect a cedar grove !

But cockle, spurge, according to their law
Might propagate their kind, with none to awe,
You'd think ; a burr had been a treasure trove. 60

XI.

No ! penury, inertness and grimace,
In some strange sort, were the land's portion. "See
Or shut your eyes," said Nature peevishly,
"It nothing skills: I cannot help my case :
'Tis the Last Judgment's fire must cure this place, 65
Calcine its clods and set my prisoners free."

XII.

If there pushed any ragged thistle-stalk
Above its mates, the head was chopped ; the bents
Were jealous else. What made those holes and
rents
In the dock's harsh swarth leaves, bruised as to baulk 70
All hope of greenness ? 'tis a brute must walk
Pashing their life out, with a brute's intents.

XIII.

As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair
In leprosy ; thin dry blades pricked the mud
Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood. 75
One stiff blind horse, his every bone a-stare,
Stood stupefied, however he came there :
Thrust out past service from the devil's stud !

XIV.

Alive ? he might be dead for aught I know,
With that red gaunt and colloped neck a-strain, 80
And shut eyes underneath the rusty mane ;
Seldom went such grotesqueness with such woe ;
I never saw a brute I hated so ;
He must be wicked to deserve such pain.

XV.

I shut my eyes and turned them on my heart. 85
 As a man calls for wine before he fights,
 I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
 Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
 Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art :
 One taste of the old time sets all to rights. 90

XVI.

Not it ! I fancied Cuthbert's reddening face
 Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
 Dear fellow, till I almost felt him fold
 An arm in mine to fix me to the place,
 That way he used. Alas, one night's disgrace ! 95
 Out went my heart's new fire and left it cold.

XVII.

Giles then, the soul of honour—there he stands
 Frank as ten years ago when knighted first.
 What honest man should dare (he said) he durst.
 Good—but the scene shifts—faugh ! what hangman- 100
 hands
 Pin to his breast a parchment ? His own bands
 Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon and curst !

XVIII.

Better this present than a past like that ;
 Back therefore to my darkening path again !
 No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain. 105
 Will the night send a howlet or a bat ?
 I asked : when something on the dismal flat
 Came to arrest my thoughts and change their train.

XIX.

A sudden little river crossed my path
 As unexpected as a serpent comes. 110
 No sluggish tide congenial to the glooms ;

This, as it frothed by, might have been a bath
 For the fiend's glowing hoof—to see the wrath
 Of its black eddy bespate with flakes and spumes

XX.

So petty yet so spiteful! All along, 115
 Low scrubby alders kneeled down over it;
 Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
 Of mute despair, a suicidal throng:
 The river which had done them all the wrong,
 Whate'er that was, rolled by, deterred no whit. 120

XXI.

Which, while I forded,—good saints, how I feared
 To set my foot upon a dead man's cheek,
 Each step, or feel the spear I thrust to seek
 For hollows, tangled in his hair or beard!
 —It may have been a water-rat I speared, 125
 But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek.

XXII.

Glad was I when I reached the other bank.
 Now for a better country. Vain presage!
 Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage,
 Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank 130
 Soil to a plash? Toads in a poisoned tank,
 Or wild cats in a red-hot iron cage—

XXIII.

The fight must so have seemed in that fell cirque.
 What penned them there, with all the plain to choose?
 No foot-print leading to that horrid mews, 135
 None out of it. Mad brewage set to work
 Their brains, no doubt, like galley-slaves the Turk
 Pits for his pastime, Christians against Jews.

XXIV.

And more than that—a furlong on—why, there !
 What bad use was that engine for, that wheel, 140
 Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel
 Men's bodies out like silk ? with all the air
 Of Tophet's tool, on earth left unaware,
 Or brought to sharpen its rusty teeth of steel.

XXV.

Then came a bit of stubbed ground, once a wood, 145
 Next a marsh, it would seem, and now mere earth
 Desperate and done with ; (so a fool finds mirth,
 Makes a thing and then mars it, till his mood
 Changes and off he goes !) within a rood—
 Bog, clay and rubble, sand and stark black dearth. 150

XXVI.

Now blotches rankling, coloured gay and grim,
 Now patches where some leanness of the soil's
 Broke into moss or substances like boils ;
 Then came some palsied oak, a cleft in him
 Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim 155
 Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils.

XXVII.

And just as far as ever from the end !
 Nought in the distance but the evening, nought
 To point my footstep further ! At the thought,
 A great black bird, Apollyon's bosom-friend, 160
 Sailed past, nor beat his wide wing dragon-penned
 That brushed my cap—perchance the guide I sought.

XXVIII.

For, looking up, aware I somehow grew,
 'Spite of the dusk, the plain had given place
 All round to mountains—with such name to grace 165

Mere ugly heights and heaps now stolen in view.
 How thus they had surprised me,—solve it, you!
 How to get from them was no clearer case.

XXIX.

Yet half I seemed to recognise some trick
 Of mischief happened to me, God knows when— 170
 In a bad dream perhaps. Here ended, then,
 Progress this way. When, in the very nick
 Of giving up, one time more, came a click
 As when a trap shuts—you're inside the den!

XXX.

Burningly it came on me all at once, 175
 This was the place! those two hills on the right,
 Crouched like two bulls locked horn in horn in fight;
 While to the left, a tall scalped mountain . . . Dunce,
 Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
 After a life spent training for the sight! 180

XXXI.

What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
 The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart,
 Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
 In the whole world. The tempest's mocking elf
 Points to the shipman thus the unseen shelf 185
 He strikes on, only when the timbers start.

XXXII.

Not see? because of night perhaps?—why, day
 Came back again for that! before it left,
 The dying sunset kindled through a cleft:
 The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay, 190
 Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,—
 “Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!”

XXXIII.

Not hear ? when noise was everywhere ! it tolled
 Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears
 Of all the lost adventurers my peers,— 195
 How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
 And such was fortunate, yet each of old
 Lost, lost ! one moment knelled the woe of years.

XXXIV.

There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
 To view the last of me, a living frame 200
 For one more picture ! in a sheet of flame
 I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
 Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
 And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*"

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD.

I.

Oh, to be in England
 Now that April's there,
 And whoever wakes in England
 Sees, some morning, unaware,
 That the lowest boughs and the brush-wood sheaf 5
 Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
 While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
 In England—now !

II.

And after April, when May follows,
 And the whitethroat builds, and all the swallows— 10
 Hark ! where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
 Leans to the field and scatters on the clover

Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over,
Lest you should think he never could recapture 15
The first fine careless rapture !
And though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower,
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower ! 20

MEETING AT NIGHT.

L.

THE gray sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery little ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

II.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each !

PARTING AT MORNING.

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,
And the sun looked over the mountain's rim—
And straight was a path of gold for him,
And the need of a world of men for me.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY.

(AS DISTINGUISHED BY AN ITALIAN PERSON OF QUALITY.)

I.

HAD I but plenty of money, money enough and to spare,
 The house for me, no doubt, were a house in the city-square.
 Ah, such a life, such a life, as one leads at the window
 there!

II.

Something to see, by Bacchus, something to hear, at least!
 There, the whole day long, one's life is a perfect feast; 5
 While up at a villa one lives, I maintain it, no more than a
 beast.

III.

Well now, look at our villa! stuck like the horn of a bull
 Just on a mountain's edge as bare as the creature's skull,
 Save a mere shag of a bush with hardly a leaf to pull!
 —I scratch my own, sometimes, to see if the hair's turned 10
 wool.

IV.

But the city, oh the city—the square with the houses!
 Why?
 They are stone-faced, white as a curd, there's something to
 take the eye!
 Houses in four straight lines, not a single front awry!
 You watch who crosses and gossips, who saunters, who
 hurries by:
 Green blinds, as a matter of course, to draw when the sun 15
 gets high;
 And the shops with fanciful signs which are painted
 properly.

V.

What of a villa? Though winter be over in March by
rights,
'Tis May perhaps ere the snow shall have withered well off
the heights:
You've the brown ploughed land before, where the oxen
steam and wheeze,
And the hills over-smoked behind by the faint gray olive 20
trees.

VI.

Is it better in May, I ask you? you've summer all at once;
In a day he leaps complete with a few strong April suns!
'Mid the sharp short emerald wheat, scarce risen three
fingers well,
The wild tulip at end of its tube, blows out its great red
bell,
Like a thin clear bubble of blood, for the children to pick 25
and sell.

VII.

Is it ever hot in the square? There's a fountain to spout
and splash!
In the shade it sings and springs; in the shine such foam-
bows flash
On the horses with curling fish-tails, that prance and paddle
and pash
Round the lady atop in the conch—fifty gazers do not abash,
Though all that she wears is some weeds round her waist 30
in a sort of sash!

VIII.

All the year long at the villa, nothing's to see though you
linger,
Except yon cypress that points like Death's lean lifted fore-
finger.
Some think fireflies pretty, when they mix in the corn and
mingle,

Or thrud the stinking hemp till the stalks of it seem a-tingle.
 Late August or early September, the stunning cicala is 35
 shrill,
 And the bees keep their tiresome whine round the resinous
 firs on the hill.
 Enough of the seasons,—I spare you the months of the
 fever and chill.

IX.

Ere opening your eyes in the city, the blessed church-bells
 begin :
 No sooner the bells leave off, than the diligence rattles in :
 You get the pick of the news, and it costs you never a pin. 40
 By and by there's the travelling doctor gives pills, lets
 blood, draws teeth ;
 Or the pulcinello-trumpet breaks up the market beneath.
 At the post-office such a scene-picture — the new play,
 piping hot !
 And a notice how, only this morning, three liberal thieves
 were shot.
 Above it, behold the archbishop's most fatherly of rebukes, 45
 And beneath, with his crown and his lion, some little new
 law of the Duke's !
 Or a sonnet with flowery marge, to the Reverend Don
 So-and-so
 Who is Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarca, Saint Jerome, and
 Cicero,
 "And moreover" (the sonnet goes rhyming), "the skirts of
 St. Paul has reached,
 Having preached us those six Lent-lectures more unctuous 50
 than ever he preached."
 Noon strikes,—here sweeps the procession ! our Lady borne
 smiling and smart
 With a pink gauze gown all spangles, and seven swords
 stuck in her heart !
Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, tootle-te-tootle the fife ;
 No keeping one's haunches still ; it's the greatest pleasure
 in life

X.

But bless you, it's dear—it's dear!—fowls, wine, at double 55
the rate.
They have clapped a new tax upon salt, and what oil pays
passing the gate
It's a horror to think of. And so, the villa for me, not the
city!
Beggars can scarcely be choosers—but still—ah, the pity,
the pity!
Look, two and two go the priests, then the monks with
cowls and sandals,
And the penitents dressed in white shirts, a-holding the. 60
yellow candles.
One, he carries a flag up straight, and another a cross with
handles,
And the Duke's guard brings up the rear, for the better
prevention of scandals.
Bang, whang, whang, goes the drum, *tootle-te-tootle* the fife.
Oh, a day in the city-square, there is no such pleasure in
life!

THE LOST MISTRESS.

I.

ALL's over, then : does truth sound bitter
As one at first believes?
Hark, 'tis the sparrows' good-night twitter
About your cottage eaves!

II.

And the leaf-buds on the vine are woolly,
I noticed that, to-day;
One day more bursts them open fully
—You know the red turns gray.

III.

To-morrow we meet the same then, dearest ?
 May I take your hand in mine ?
 Mere friends are we,—well, friends the merest
 Keep much that I resign : 10

IV.

For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
 Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
 Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
 Though it stay in my soul for ever !— 15

V.

Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
 Or only a thought stronger ;
 I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
 Or so very little longer ! 20

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
 She plucked that piece of geranium flower,
 Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
 Little has yet been changed, I think :
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays thro' the hinge's chink. 5

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ; 10

It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,— 15
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew— 20
 And, just because I was thrice as old
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide,
 Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

IV.

No, indeed ! for God above 25
 Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
 And creates the love to reward the love :
 I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
 Delayed it may be for more lives yet,
 Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few : 30
 Much is to learn, much to forget
 Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come,—at last it will,
 When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
 In the lower earth, in the years long still, 35
 That body and soul so pure and gay ?
 Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
 And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
 And what you would do with me, in fine,
 In the new life come in the old one's stead. 40

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,
 Given up myself so many times,
 Gained me the gains of various men,
 Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes;
 Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope, 45
 Either I missed or itself missed me :
 And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
 What is the issue ? let us see !

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while.
 My heart seemed full as it could hold ? 50
 There was place and to spare for the frank young smile,
 And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
 So, hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :
 See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
 There, that is our secret : go to sleep ! 55
 You will wake, and remember, and understand.

A LOVERS' QUARREL.

I.

Oh, what a dawn of day !
 How the March sun feels like May !
 All is blue again
 After last night's rain,
 And the South dries the hawthorn-spray 5
 Only, my Love's away !
 I'd as lief that the blue were gray.

II.

Runnels, which rillels swell,
 Must be dancing down the dell,
 With a foaming head
 On the beryl bed
 Paven smooth as a hermit's cell;
 Each with a tale to tell,
 Could my Love but attend as well.

III.

Dearest, three months ago !
 When we lived blocked-up with snow,—
 When the wind would edge
 In and in his wedge,
 In, as far as the point could go—
 Not to our ingle, though,
 Where we loved each the other so !

IV.

Laughs with so little cause !
 We devised games out of straws.
 We would try and trace
 One another's face
 In the ash, as an artist draws ;
 Free on each other's flaws,
 How we chattered like two church daws !

V.

What's in the *Times* ?—a scold
 At the Emperor deep and cold ;
 He has taken a bride
 To his gruesome side,
 That's as fair as himself is bold :
 There they sit ermine-stoled,
 And she powders her hair with gold.

VI.

Fancy the Pampas' sheen !
 Miles and miles of gold and green
 Where the sunflowers blow
 In a solid glow,
 And—to break now and then the screen— 40
 Black neck and eyeballs keen,
 Up a wild horse leaps between !

VII.

Try, will our table turn ?
 Lay your hands there light, and yearn
 Till the yearning slips 45
 Thro' the finger-tips
 In a fire which a few discern,
 And a very few feel burn,
 And the rest, they may live and learn !

VIII.

Then we would up and pace, 50
 For a change, about the place,
 Each with arm o'er neck :
 'Tis our quarter-deck,
 We are seamen in woeful case.
 Help in the ocean-space ! 55
 Or, if no help, we'll embrace.

IX.

See, how she looks now, dressed
 In a sledging-cap and vest !
 'Tis a huge fur cloak—
 Like a reindeer's yoke 60
 Falls the lappet along the breast :
 Sleeves for her arms to rest,
 Or to hang, as my Love likes best.

X.

Teach me to flirt a fan
 As the Spanish ladies can, 65
 Or I tint your lip
 With a burnt stick's tip
 And you turn into such a man !
 Just the two spots that span
 Half the bill of the young male swan. 70

XI.

Dearest, three months ago
 When the mesmerizer Snow
 With his hand's first sweep
 Put the earth to sleep :
 'Twas a time when the heart could show 75
 All—how was earth to know,
 'Neath the mute hand's to-and-fro !

XII.

Dearest, three months ago
 When we loved each other so,
 Lived and loved the same 80
 Till an evening came
 When a shaft from the devil's bow
 Pierced to our ingle-glow,
 And the friends were friend and foe !

XIII.

Not from the heart beneath— 85
 'Twas a bubble born of breath,
 Neither sneer nor vaunt,
 Nor reproach nor taunt.
 See a word, how it severeth !
 Oh, power of life and death 90
 In the tongue, as the Preacher saith !

XIV.

Woman, and will you cast
 For a word, quite off at last
 Me, your own, your You,—
 Since, as truth is true, 95
 I was You all the happy past—
 Me do you leave aghast
 With the memories We amassed?

XV.

Love, if you knew the light
 That your soul casts in my sight 100
 How I look to you
 For the pure and true
 And the beauteous and the right,—
 Bear with a moment's spite
 When a mere mote threatens the white! 105

XVI.

What of a hasty word?
 Is the fleshly heart not stirred
 By a worm's pin-prick
 Where its roots are quick?
 See the eye, by a fly's foot blurred— 110
 Ear, when a straw is heard
 Scratch the brain's coat of curd!

XVII.

Foul be the world or fair
 More or less, how can I care!
 'Tis the world the same
 For my praise or blame, 115
 And endurance is easy there
 Wrong in the one thing rare—
 Oh, it is hard to bear!

XVIII.

Here's the spring back or close, 120
When the almond-blossom blows :
 We shall have the word
 In a minor third
There is none but the cuckoo knows :
 Heaps of the guelder-rose ! 125
I must bear with it, I suppose.

XIX.

Could but November come,
Were the noisy birds struck dumb
 At the warning slash
 Of his driver's lash— 130
I would laugh like the valiant Thumb
 Facing the castle glum
And the giant's fee-faw-fum !

XX.

Then, were the world well stripped
Of the gear wherein equipped 135
 We can stand apart,
 Heart dispense with heart
In the sun, with the flowers unnipped,—
 Oh, the world's hangings ripped,
We were both in a bare-walled crypt ! 140

XXI.

Each in the crypt would cry
" But one freezes here ! and why ?
 When a heart, as chill,
 At my own would thrill
Back to life, and its fires out-fly ? 145
 Heart, shall we live or die ?
The rest, . . . settle by-and-by ! "

XXII.

So, she'd efface the score,
 And forgive me as before.
 It is twelve o'clock :
 I shall hear her knock
 In the worst of a storm's uproar,
 I shall pull her through the door
 I shall have her for evermore !

150

 ART VOGLER.

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORISING UPON THE
 MUSICAL INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION.)

I.

Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
 Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
 Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when
 Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
 Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
 Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep
 removed,—

5

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable
 Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess
 he loved !

II.

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of
 mine,

This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned
 to raise !

10

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and
 now combine,
 Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his
 praise !
 And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down
 to hell,
 Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
 Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace 15
 well,
 Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent
 minion he was,
 Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many
 a crest,
 Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as
 glass,
 Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest: 20
 For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,
 When a great illumination surprises a festal night—
 Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to spire)
 Up, the pinnaced glory reached, and the pride of my
 soul was in sight.

IV.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match 25
 man's birth,
 Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I;
 And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach
 the earth,
 As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale
 the sky:
 Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with
 mine,

Not a point nor peak but found and fixed its wandering 30
 star ;
 Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and they did not pale nor
 pine,
 For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near
 nor far.

V.

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare
 and glow,
 Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
 Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should 35
 blow,
 Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at
 last ;
 Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the
 body and gone,
 But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth
 their new :
 What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall be
 anon ;
 And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I was made 40
 perfect too.

VI.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my
 soul,
 All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly
 forth,
 All through music and me ! For think, had I painted the
 whole,
 Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so
 wonder-worth :
 Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds 45
 from cause,
 Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is
 told ;

It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws,
Painter and poet are proud in the artist-list enrolled :—

VII.

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
Existent behind all laws, that made them and, lo, they 50
are !
And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to man,
That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound,
but a star.
Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said :
Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought : 55
And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow
the head !

VIII.

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too
slow ;
For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he feared,
That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was to go. 60
Never to be again ! But many more of the kind
As good, nay, better perchance : is this your comfort to
me ?
To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind
To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay, what
was, shall be.

IX.

Therefore to whom turn I but to thee, the ineffable Name ? 65
Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with hands !
What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the same ?
Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power
expands ?
There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live
as before ;
The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ; 70

What was good shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;
On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect
round.

X.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist :
Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the 75
melodist
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;
Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by. 80

XI.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days ? Have we withered or
agonised ?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might
issue thence ?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony should be
prized ?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear, 85
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and
woe :
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear ;
The rest may reason and welcome : 'tis we musicians
know.

XII.

Well, it is earth with me ; silence resumes her reign :
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce. 90
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,

NOTES.

SONG FROM "PIPPA PASSES" (p. 1).

"Pippa Passes; a Drama," appeared in 1841. It formed the first of a series of volumes called *Bells and Pomegranates*.

Pippa, a young girl who works in a silk factory, during her one-day's annual holiday sings a number of little songs which influence the lives of certain people who hear them. The song here given is notable as a simple and intense expression of healthy, spontaneous joy; it is full of open-air delight in the sights and sounds of nature, and of the optimism which comes from it:—

"Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness."

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP (p. 1).

Appeared in *Dramatic Lyrics* (1842). "The story is true; but its actual hero was a man" (Mrs Orr).

l. 1, stormed Ratisbon. This was in April 1809, in the war against Austria; after the battle of Eckmühl.

l. 7, prone, hanging forward.

l. 11, Lannes. Jean Lannes, Duc de Montebello (1769-1809), was one of Napoleon's greatest marshals. He died soon after this, having been wounded by a cannon shot in the battle of Aspern (May 1809).

l. 29, flag-bird flap his vans. The flag-bird is the eagle which surmounted the imperial standards. Vans, which is practically the same word as fans, mean wings. An example of Browning's unnecessary awkwardness and ungainliness of expression.

l. 39, his chief beside. In early English (Anglo-Saxon) the preposition often followed the noun. This can now occur only in a few instances.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN (p. 3).

This poem was written in May 1842, to amuse William Macready, the little son of William Clarke Macready, the famous actor and manager, who had produced Browning's *Strafford*, a few years before. The boy had a talent for drawing, and asked Browning to give him something to illustrate. The verses were not intended for publication; but were, as a matter of fact, added to the volume of *Bells and Pomegranates*, then about to appear (*Dramatic Lyrics*, 1842), in order to fill up a vacant space.

The legend which is here related seems to occur first in a literary form during the sixteenth century, the same period which gave us *Faust* and other weird stories. The earliest form mentioned by Mrs Gutch, in an admirable paper in *Folk-Lore* (vol. iii.), is that of a German physician, Fincelsius, in 1556. Other writers soon tell the story in quick succession, amongst them, Wier, another physician, whose book, *De Praestigiis Demonum* (1566), was the most valuable work of the age on witchcraft and similar superstitions. Wier, in his accustomed way, made some effort at sifting the evidence. In English, the story makes its first appearance in Richard Verstegan's strangely-named book, *The Restitution of Decayed Intelligence in Antiquities* (1605). It occurs again in James Howell's *Familiar Letters* (1645), and again in Nathaniel Wanley's * *Wonders of the Little World; or a General History of Man* (1678), a most extraordinary collection of stories. In his version Wanley mentions Wier and Howell as his authorities. Any of these may have served Browning as the source of his tale. Dr Furnivall thinks that he followed Wanley; Mr Jacobs that "there are touches which seem to come from Howell." He probably used all three. Thus Verstegan and Howell do not mention the name of the hill, which Wanley calls Koppen (Browning's Koppelberg). On the other hand, Wanley gives the date 1284, while Verstegan fixes it in the year 1376, which is Browning's date.

All early versions agree in stating the number of children as 130, but some restrict them to the male sex, while others mention both boys and girls.

It may be mentioned that another version of the story, which lays the scene at Newport in the Isle of Wight, is given by Abraham Elder in his *Tales and Legends of the Isle of Wight* (1839). Mr Jacobs, who gives this modern antique in his *More English Fairy Tales*, has an interesting note on the subject.

There appears to be no likelihood of our finding a definite

* Dr Furnivall and other writers speak of "North Wanley." This must be due to a misprint. On the title page the name is contracted to "Nath. Wanley."

historical basis for the story, though hypothesises as to what *may* have been the nucleus of fact about which the story grew are plentiful enough. See Mrs Gutch's paper mentioned above, and compare also Baring-Gould's *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*.

l. 1, **Hamelin**. The old town lies on the confluence of the Hamel and the Weser, in the extreme south-western corner of Hanover, and not in Brunswick as Browning (following Verstegan) asserts. It was once an important place and a member of the Hanseatic league.

l. 20, **fifty different sharps and flats**. In fifty different keys.

l. 28, **obese**. The accent is here placed on the first syllable, which is, of course, contrary to common usage, but is necessary to bring in the extravagant rhyme in the next line. Such rhymes are called Hudibrastic, from their frequent employment in Butler's *Hudibras*. Compare the rhymes in lines 35, 37 and 68, 69 of the present poems.

l. 37, **guilder**. Coins circulating in the Netherlands, and well known all over Europe. See Shakespeare, *Comedy of Errors*, I., iv. The modern Dutch guilder is worth one-and-eightpence.

l. 51, **plate of turtle**. Browning's mayor and corporation are obviously not intended to be slavishly accurate in their local colour. They are modelled on the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London rather than on the municipal authorities of mediæval Germany.

l. 64, **kith and kin**. *Kith* now means practically the same thing as *kin*, viz., one's relatives or kindred. The phrase is, therefore, pleonastic. But originally kith perhaps meant acquaintance, those whom we know, *kyððe*, from *clād*, known; though it is used in the *Beowulf* in the sense of home, native land.

l. 68, **Trump of Doom's tone**. The Revelation of St John, chap. viii. verses 6 *seq.*

l. 87, **old-fangled**. Old-fashioned. Formed on a false analogy, in imitation of *new-fangled*. The latter word means "ready to catch at what is new"; and comes from the A.S. *fangen*, part of a verb meaning to catch.

l. 89, **the Cham**. A corrupt form of Khan, a Tartar title, equivalent to prince.

l. 91, **the Nizam**. The title of the princes who ruled over a large part of the Deccan. Their successor is now known as the Nizam of Hyderabad. The word Nizam means a regulator or ruler.

l. 92, **vampire bats**. Blood-sucking bats.

l. 123, **stout as Julius Cæsar**. The story that Cæsar swam across the harbour at Alexandria, when besieged on the mole by the Egyptians (B.C. 48), using only one hand and holding his precious *Commentaries* above his head with the other, is rejected by modern writers.

1. 133, **train-oil-flasks**, bottles containing oil derived from the blubber of whales.

1. 136, **psaltery**. The word usually given by the authorised version of the Bible as equivalent to *nebel*, the name of a large stringed instrument of music used by the ancient Hebrews. The actual shape and character of the *nebel* are not known, but it must not be identified with the dulcimer.

1. 138, **drysaltery**. Originally a place for selling or storing salted meats, pickles, and sauces; now a warehouse for glues, colours, chemicals, etc. Notice the rhyme "by psaltery" and "drysaltery." Of course it is not a legitimate one, because there can be no stress on "by." Cf. lines 302-3.

1. 139, **nuncheon**. The *noon-tide* meal. Notice that it is not a different form of *luncheon*, which is really a rustic word for a big piece of bread. Thus Gay uses *luncheon* in his *Shepherd's Week* (ii. 70),

"When hungry thou stood'st staring like an oaf,
I slic'd the luncheon from the barley loaf,"

where the speaker is referring to the evening meal.

1. 153, **perked**. To perk (a Welsh word) means originally to smarten or trim; then to look smartly and rather impudently.

1. 155, **looked blue**. In this colloquial phrase "blue" seems to mean what we usually call livid or lead colour—the colour which some people exhibit when they turn faint. To "look blue" is to look ill or faint.

1. 158, **Vin-de-Grave**. A white French wine, produced in the Bordeaux district on the *graves* or gravel-beds.

1. 169, **poke**. A bag or pouch. Pocket is the diminutive.

1. 182, **stiver**. A small coin. From the Dutch *stuiver*, the name of a coin worth about a penny.

1. 187, **ribald**. For the sake of rhyme we get another mispronounced word. The received pronunciation is *rib'ald*, with the *i* short.

1. 220, **Koppelberg Hill**. Also Koppenberg. Cannot now be identified. What is now called the Bassberg was, according to some, the mediæval Koppen. "Koppen is suggestive of *head* [Kopf], and Dr Otto Meinardus, Royal Archivist at Berlin, who has bestowed much research on the records of his native Hamelin, believes that the scene of the disappearance was the two-headed Teutberg, which commands the Hildesheim and Hanover roads, and bars the end of the Weser valley. This would be a far cry for the little children, but the Bassberg is within a stroll of the town" (Mrs Gutch, *Folk-Lore*, iii. p. 231).

1. 245, **The sparrows were brighter**. Compare Keat's *Bards of Passion and of Mirth* (ll. 14 seq.).

l. 258, A text. St Matthew, xix. 24.

l. 269, made a decree. "In memory whereof it was then ordained that from henceforth no drum, pipe, or other instrument should be sounded in the street leading to the gate through which they passed, nor no ostery [inn] be there holden. And it was also established that from that time forward in all public writings that should be made in the town, after the date therein set down of the year of our Lord, the date of the year of the going forth of the children should be added, the which they have accordingly ever since continued. And this great wonder happened on the 22nd day of July in the year of our Lord 1376" (Verstegan).

Other accounts give the year as 1284 and the day of the month as 26th June, "The feast of St John and St Paul"—which it is not, but the vigil of St Peter and St Paul.

l. 284, wrote the story in a column. The column and the stained glass window are mentioned by the sixteenth century tellers of the legend. See Mrs Gutch's paper in *Folk-Lore*, already alluded to.

l. 290, in Transylvania. "There are divers found among the Saxons in Transylvania that have like surnames unto divers of the burghers of Hamel, and will thereby seem to infer that this juggler or pied piper might by necromancy have transported them thither; but this carrieth little appearance of truth [O the sceptical rogue!], because it would have been almost as great wonder unto the Saxons of Transylvania to have had so many strange children brought amongst them, they knew not how, as it were to those of Hamel to lose them, and so they could not but have kept memory of so strange a thing, if indeed any such thing there happened" (Verstegan).

Mrs Gutch (*Folk-Lore*, iii. 251), on the authority of a recent traveller, asserts that at the village of Nadesch, in Transylvania, an annual custom is supposed to commemorate the arrival of the children.

l. 297, trepanned. To trepan means to ensnare, entrap. It is connected with trap, and was formerly spelt trapan; from French *traper* or *trapper*.

l. 300, Willy. See p. 118, above.

wipers. The phrase, "To wipe out a score," arises from the old practice of chalking-up the score of customers behind the tavern door.

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS (p. 12).

Appeared first in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). "I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a

gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home" (Browning). It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of an Italian book which he was fond of carrying about with him. The poem is not founded on any actual historical occurrence.

The route followed, however, is actual enough.

They go north-easterly to Lokeren, then keep due east to Boom, and then more south-easterly to Aerschot, about ten miles from Louvain. The poet does not say that they went to Hasselt, but "by Hasselt," and so with Looz and Tongres. They probably passed between Hasselt and the two latter places, riding straight across country to Aix-la-Chapelle. The ride can hardly have been less than 130 miles, and perhaps twenty or thirty more.

l. 5, *postern*, a small gate in the walls of a city.

l. 7, the *great pace*. This implies not only fast, but also with great strides; a French phrase, not quite naturalised.

l. 10, *pique*. More correctly *piqué*, the saddlecloth, so called from the lozenge-shaped pattern usual on these cloths.

l. 28, *askance*, sideways; used now only of a glance or look. The origin is doubtful. Wedgewood suggests from the Italian *d schiancio*, slopingly or slantingly. Dr Skeat thinks from the Italian *scansare*, which Florio's Dictionary explains as "to go aslope or asconce or askew."

l. 29, *spume*, foam.

l. 38, *Past Looz and past Tongres*. As they were going across country, the riders probably passed between Hasselt, on the north, and Looz and Tongres on the south. The poet does not say that they went *through* these places.

l. 41, *dome-spire*, the spire of a *Dom* or cathedral. It is noteworthy that while the words *Dom* and *duomo*, both from Lat. *domus*, a house, signify a cathedral or great church, the corresponding English word *dome* signifies a cupola. This is probably due to the fact that when Charlemagne built his great abbey church at Aix he crowned it with a cupola—this feature, as well as the general plan, being taken from the Byzantine Church of St Vitale at Ravenna.

Dalhem (Dalheim) lies nearly thirty miles to the north of Aix, and far out of sight. Besides, it is not so placed that any tower near there could be seen lit up by the morning sun, by any one who was in sight of Aix. The town is now a Prussian frontier railway station.

l. 44, *croup*, part of a horse just behind the saddle. It is not clear whether the roan fell sideways over on her back, with both neck and croup on the ground, or turned a somersault.

THE PATRIOT (p. 15).

First printed in *Men and Women* (1855).

A political leader who has tasted the joys of popular devotion falls on evil days, and goes to humiliation and perhaps death.

l. 2, like mad. A colloquial expression seldom seen in poetry.

l. 10, what else. Bad rhyme, for the final *s* in *bells* is pronounced like *z*.

l. 11, Alack. No connection with *alas*, although used in the same way. Etymology unknown; amongst others that have been suggested are the combinations *Ah-lack* and *Ah-Lord*.

l. 19, At the Shambles' Gate. This perhaps hints at the horrible and complicated forms of execution for political offences formerly in use.

THE LOST LEADER (p. 16).

It is a song of regret put into the mouth of a Radical or Republican, who bewails the desertion of the cause by a great man who has gone over to the conservative or reactionary party. First appeared in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845). This and the last poem form pendants to each other: the one a picture of a leader deserted by his followers, the other of followers deserted by their leader.

In a letter quoted by Mrs Orr, Browning says, "I can only answer with something of shame and contrition that I undoubtedly had Wordsworth in mind, but simply as a model" (*Life*, p. 132); and he made the same statement to other persons on other occasions. Wordsworth, like most other able young men, had sympathised with the Revolution in its early days, and had been compelled to withdraw his sympathies; but this change, as in the case of Southey, Coleridge, and others, had been the result of natural development of character, as well as the disastrous course which the Revolutionary movement had run. No bribe, whether money or titular dignity, influenced the great poet. Browning in another letter explains carefully that he made no attempt to portray the character of Wordsworth. "But just as in the tapestry on my wall, I can recognise figures which have *struck out* a fancy, on occasion, that, though truly enough derived, yet would be preposterous as a copy;

so though I dare not deny the original of my little poem, I altogether refuse to have it considered as the 'very effigies' of such a moral and intellectual superiority."

It may be added here that Browning always to the end considered himself a Liberal; but like Tennyson, Carlyle, Kingsley, and Dickens, he powerfully contributed to the break up of the laissez-faire school of Liberalism, which dominated English political life during the middle of the century.

l. 2, *riband* to stick to his coat. Englishmen do not, as a rule, wear "a riband" to signify that they possess an "order."

l. 8, *Rags*—were they purple. This seems to mean:—We would have given him all our rags; he would have been proud indeed, if they had been marks of dignity, since we gave them so freely.

l. 13, *Shakespeare was with us*. It is at least very doubtful whether Shakespeare had any sympathy whatever with the ideas which lie at the bottom of modern Liberalism. In *Henry VI.*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, and other plays, Shakespeare shows that he regards "the people" as having no political capacity and very few political rights. He has no belief in the middle classes or the working class. The "citizens" usually play a mean and unworthy part in his historical plays.

l. 22, *One task more declined*. Notice the change of metre for dactyls to amphibrachs, which lasts for some lines.

l. 29, *Best fight on well*. The subject is the lost leader. *He* had best fight on well with his new colours, for we taught him to fight, and to strike gallantly.

THE ITALIAN IN ENGLAND (p. 17).

Appeared in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845).

Lombardy and Venetia were given to Austria by the Congress of Vienna, when the map of Europe was rearranged after the fall of Napoleon. Austrian rule was exceedingly unpopular in Italy, and a constant agitation against it went on. The kind of incident described in the poem was of frequent occurrence, although there is not the slightest reason to think that this particular story is true. Like Byron, Shelley, and his own wife, Browning heartily sympathised with the anti-Austrian movement; and was delighted when Mazzini, the Italian patriot, told him how he had read this poem to some of his fellow exiles in England, to show them how well an Englishman could sympathise with them.

l. 8, *Charles*. The speaker's brother or friend who had deserted the cause of national liberty. He is of course not Charles Albert, the King of Sardinia, with whom Dr Berdoe identifies him.

l. 10, *Metternich*. The great Austrian Chancellor (died 1859)

who, more than any one else, represented the spirit of anti-liberal reaction in Austria and Europe. "Our friend" is, of course, ironical.

l. 41, *crypt*. The arch of the aqueduct. Etymologically *crypt* means a hidden place; in modern English it means a vaulted substructure of a building, more or less under the general level of the ground.

l. 53, *Persuade*. Infinitive; supply "to."

l. 75, *duomo*. The cathedral. The word comes from the Latin *domus*, and is pronounced as a dissyllable. See p. 122, above.

l. 76, *Tenebræ*. This is a popular name for the nocturnal service properly called *lauds*, when it is sung by anticipation on the evenings of Wednesday, Thursday, and Good Friday, in Holy Week. The name *tenebræ* (Latin for darkness) is given to it because the church is darkened and the lights at the Altar end are gradually extinguished during the singing of the Benedictus.

l. 122, I felt his red wet throat. Notice this characteristic bit of Italian ferocity.

l. 152, with her spindle made a trench. The spindle is a tapering piece of wood round which the flax is fastened. The simplest possible way of using it, without a wheel, for the purpose of spinning thread is still occasionally found, not only in Italy, but in other European countries and in Scotland. It is flung round the spinner so as to rotate the thread, and in so doing may make a circular "trench" in the dust.

THE ENGLISHMAN IN ITALY (p. 22).

Originally published as a pendant to the last poem in the volume of 1845.

The scene is laid in the Piano di Sorrento, the level land in the peninsula which encloses the Bay of Naples on the south. Browning visited this district in the autumn of 1844.

l. 1, *Ferth*. A little girl, who takes shelter with the Englishman.

l. 5, *Scirocco*. Two distinct winds are known by this name, one a warm rain-bearing wind, the other hot, parching, and laden with dust. Here, as is generally the case, the former is meant.

l. 10, tell your beads. Say your prayers over the beads of the rosary.

l. 11, All the Plain, etc. Every fact which I have picked up, all the things I have seen or heard.

l. 21, your mother bites off. Dr Alexander Hill says: "The whole reference to quails must be thrown into a parenthesis, and read, 'Each grape on the bunches your mother bites off for her

supper' " (*Browning Notes*, p. 40). This is obviously wrong, if there is any virtue in punctuation.

l. 47, *frails*, baskets of rushes. From the Old French, *frail*, a basket. The word is used by Langland and Wiclif, and is fairly common in Elizabethan English.

l. 52, *blind-rock*, submerged rock.

l. 57, *sea-fruit*. The Italians eat sea-urchins, cuttle-fish, and other denizens of the waters which are not regarded as edible by us. They call them "frutti di mare" (Hallam, ii. 162).

l. 67, *brass-coin*. Badge of some religious confraternity.

l. 92, *regales*, "Regale, a noble entertainment or treat" (Bailey's Dict., 1766).

l. 97, *lasagne*, ribbon-shaped macaroni.

l. 107, *cheese-ball*, soft cheese made in the shape of a ball.

l. 113, *prickly-pear's red flesh*. The accent falls, clumsily enough, on the word "red."

l. 123, *hard fruit*. Medlars have to be kept for some time before they become soft and fit to eat.

l. 135, *on the myrtles*. Children in Italy eat the myrtle-berries.

l. 138, *sorbs*, the fruit of the service-tree (*pyrus domestica*), which resembles our rowan or mountain-ash, and which is regarded by some botanists as a cultivated variety of that tree. The fruit is larger, however.

l. 140, *hairy-gold orbs*. There is a difficulty in identifying the fruit meant. It may be the prickly pear or Indian fig, already mentioned (l. 113), the fruit of a plant of the cactus kind.

l. 157, *fume-weed*, a kind of fumitory. The origin of the name is uncertain: it is, perhaps, due to the lightness and frailness of the plant.

l. 162, *lentisks*. Mastic-trees, from which the mastic used to make varnish comes.

l. 191, *what shows a branch*. This is perhaps the "dogwood," the branches of which are, it seems, sometimes dyed to make them redder. But the leaves are brilliantly red in autumn, not "pale sea-green." More probably, however, the tamarisk is intended.

l. 171, *Calvano*. This mountain is not indicated in any atlas I have had access to. It is not mentioned in Murray's *Guide*, nor even in Amati's great *Dizionario Corografico dell' Italia*.

l. 177, *terrible crystal*. The sea.

l. 191, *sea-pine*. *Pinus maritima*, from which most turpentine and resin is obtained.

l. 199, *your Galli*. The old Insulæ Syrenusæ, which lie off the Punta di Campanella to the south of the peninsula. These small rocky islets, which are mentioned by Virgil (*Æn.*, v. 864),

were visited by Browning in October 1844. On one of them is a little tower, as described in lines 219 *seq.*

l. 201, *their sister*. A rock half-way between the Galli and Crapolla. It was decreed that the Sirens should die when any one passed by unmoved by their song. According to one form of the legend, this occurred when Ulysses passed by, having stopped up the ears of his comrades with wax and having caused himself to be bound to the mast. The Sirens then threw themselves into the sea, and were changed into rocks.

l. 230, *the great gloom, sc., of the scirocco*.

l. 248, *the show of the Sacrament*. What is called the Exposition of the Sacrament takes place in Roman Catholic churches on certain high festivals. The consecrated Host is placed in a monstrance or ostensorium, and left on the altar for the veneration of the faithful.

l. 251, *the Rosary's Virgin*. The first Sunday of October has been kept as the festival of the Rosary, since 1573. There is, of course, some tendency for the ignorant to consider Our Lady of Sorrows, our Lady of Victory, our Lady of the Rosary, and so forth as separate persons, and Scott's account of the superstition of Louis XI. in *Quentin Durward* (chap. xxviii.) is well-known. But the absurdity has probably been much exaggerated by popular writers.

l. 257, *dizened, decorated*. Usually now "bedizened." To *dizen*, says Skeat, meant originally, to put a bunch of flax on to a distaff.

l. 265, *Bellini and Auber*. The band ventured on playing the church-music of those composers, who were very popular in the middle of the present century. Vincenzo Bellini (1802-1835) was the composer of the operas *La Sonnambula* and *I Puritani*. Daniel François Auber (1784-1871) wrote *Masaniello* and *Fra Diavolo*, two favourite operas of the French school.

l. 289, *if abolishing Corn Laws*. The Anti-Corn Law agitation was carried on in England between 1836 and 1846; in the latter year Peel abolished the obnoxious duties.

l. 291, *If 'twere proper*. Supply "As" before "If." The Englishman suggests that argument on the subject is unnecessary and absurd.

"DE GUSTIBUS" (p. 30).

First printed in *Men and Women* (1855).

The Latin proverb, "De gustibus non est disputandum," means that it is useless to dispute about tastes, "chacun a son goût," there is no accounting for tastes.

l. 5, *coppice, a small wood*.

l. 11, the bean-flowers' boon. The most delicious of all perfumes of the country.

l. 15, precipice-encurled, surrounded by precipices.

l. 22, cicala, a tree cricket. But often used of various kinds of field-crickets.

l. 24, red-rusted. The bark of the cyprus has red scales like a pine.

l. 35, the king. This must be Ferdinand II., King of Naples, who reigned from 1830 to 1859. He was one of the most worthless of a worthless house, and was known by the nickname of "Bomba." Attempts on his life were made on several occasions.

l. 40, Queen Mary's saying. Calais, which had been in the hands of England for over 200 years, was taken by the French in January 1558. Mary said that the word Calais would be found written on her heart.

BY THE FIRESIDE (p. 31).

First appeared in *Men and Women* (1855).

The middle-aged speaker, sitting by the fireside, with his wife near him, recalls the incident of his declaration of love to her in Italy. The whole form of the poem is autobiographical, although the details must be all imaginary, since Browning courted his wife in London. The scenery, says Mrs Orr, is that of the chestnut-covered hills near the Baths of Lucca, where Browning and his wife spent the summer of 1853 (See Mrs Orr's *Life*, pp. 196, 197). But the mention of Pella and the Alps shows that this mountain gorge is probably somewhere near the Col di Colma.

l. 3, hue, appearance, colour. The use of the word is obviously due to the exigencies of rhyme.

l. 4, music of all thy voices. Apparently this means that the power of song is lost. The punctuation seems unsatisfactory; the comma should come after "dumb," and not before it.

l. 5, life's November. Not to be taken too literally. The poet was only forty-three when this was published.

l. 18, branch-work, *sc.* of association.

l. 21, your hazel-trees. The memories begin with English hazels, and the path of association, like a woodland way, widens, and passes into an Italian scene.

l. 27, the leader's hand. This may mean (1) his wife, or (2) memory, or (3) Italy. Note the defective rhyme, *hand, lands*.

l. 31, Look at the ruined chapel. The first six stanzas are only an introduction to the description which follows.

l. 40, Pella. Pella is a pretty village on the west side of the Lake of Orta near Lake Maggiore.

1. 51, the sense of the yellow mountain-flowers. "Sense" means vague consciousness, as opposed to precise knowledge. "The yellow mountain flowers," *e.g.*, *arnica*.

1. 52, thorny balls, the fruit of the horse-chestnut.

1. 59, fairy-cupped. Dorothy Wordsworth writes in her Journal that "moss-cups are more proper than acorns for fairy goblets" (Knight, *Life of Wordsworth*, i. 132).

1. 61, undivulged, undisplayed. The literal meaning of "divulged" is spread among the people, published abroad.

1. 63, sudden coral nipple. The construction is imitated from the Latin, *e.g.*, *imprudens feci*. The adjective used in this way has an adverbial force.

1. 73, Cut hemp-stalks. "Hemp and flax are largely grown in this Alpine valley. The fibre is obtained by steeping the stalks in a ditch until the soft tissue has rotted away" (*Browning Notes*, pp. 70, 71). "Steep," for "are steeped." Compare, "This book sells well," meaning that it is readily sold. The active voice is used in such cases with a passive force.

1. 74, fret. There are three distinct words from (1) A.S. *fretan* = *forētan*, strengthened form of *etan* = to eat; (2) A.S. *frætwan*, to adorn; (3) French, *frette*, iron grating (*fer*). The patches of lichen remind the poet of the irregular patches made by the moth "fretting a garment," or perhaps he is thinking of the way in which the lichens seem to eat into trees and even stones by throwing in fibres.

1. 83, nuts. Chestnuts, which are largely used for food.

1. 87, half-moon-wise, semicircular. A picture of this shape is technically called a lunette.

1. 90, brunt, onset. Connected with *burn*. It originally meant a rapid attack or advance like that of fire.

1. 92, pent-house, a projecting shelter. Originally *pentice*, through French *appentis*.

1. 95, 'Five, six, nine, 1569. The "one" is omitted; an extreme case of Browning's love of ellipsis.

1. 98, aware, conscious.

1. 105, The path grey heads abhor, the path of life now leading to old age, and close to the sheer edge of death.

1. 106, For it leads. The expression of this verse is very confused. It is, of course, quite easy to see the general drift of the stanza; but the metaphors are mixed, and the syntax uncertain.

The path of life leads to a crag's sheer edge (apparently, death). Youth comes to an end there (*where?*); they (the grey-heads) continue. Age threatens, but the grey-heads despise the threat till they reach the gulf (death or age?) wherein youth drops, and this gulf (death or age?) is one inch from life's safe hem.

The best sense seems to be this:—The path of life leads to a

dangerous position, close to the abyss of death; youth disappears, age threatens, they still go on until they reach the gulf wherein youth is swallowed up [not the same gulf as that over which hangs the "crag's sheer edge"], and now they are a great deal too close to life's safe hem, which is the same thing as the crag's sheer edge (death), to be quite comfortable. If this interpretation be taken, the use of the metaphor of the "gulf," in l. 109, for "mature life" or "age," when the same image has been used in l. 106, with a different meaning (death), is the principal source of the confusion. A weakness lies in the representation of the further progress to old age as a voluntary one in defiance of warning.

Another possible explanation which has been suggested to me is that "the path greyheads abhor" is the path of love and marriage. "For, if they do not avoid the path, it leads them to a precipice where youth—hitherto flowery—stops. They (the foolish greyheads) do not stop; they despise the threatenings of age, till they come to the gulf in which their youth entirely disappears, and they escape death by but an inch."

l. 113, *that great brow*. This indicates Mrs Browning; and so does the "spirit small hand" of the next line.

l. 117, *You are wont to answer*. The wife is in such complete mental sympathy with her husband that she answers his unspoken thoughts. The possibility of such thought-transference or telepathy has apparently been proved by the researches of Gurney, Myers, Podmore, and other investigators; though the explanation of it yet remains to be found.

l. 120, *Piercing its fine flesh-stuff*, passing through the fine barrier of the body. Cf. the "rose-mesh" of *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, l. 62 (p. 109). Mrs Browning was a woman of delicate and spirit-like organisation. A visitor who saw her in Italy says, "I have never seen a human frame which seemed so nearly a transparent veil for a celestial and immortal spirit. She is a soul of fire enclosed in a shell of pearl." (Hillard, *Six Months in Italy*, 1852.)

l. 122, *which makes all things new*. Compare Revelation, xxi. 5.

l. 126, *not made with hands*. Compare 2 Corinthians, v. 1.

l. 145, *seldom miss, seldom fail to gain*.

l. 150, *let*. Present tense. Let us detach some of the heads from the chaplet of memory, and pick them up for special consideration.

l. 154, *Strained to a bell*. The hawk, before striking, often remains suspended in the air, with its wings stretched out tensely, and the tips curved slightly upwards. There is little discoverable resemblance to a bell. A friend, however, sends me an ingenious if not quite convincing sketch, which, by making use of the illusion due to perspective, gives quite a bell-like suggestion.

l. 155, streaks and rings. The hawk's breast is streaked cross-wise to the general axis of the body. The rings are not so clearly marked.

l. 160, does so heave. Note the emphatic colloquial use of "does," which is very uncommon in poetry.

l. 175, don't fear thunder. The terrors of God's anger are enough to prevent thieves from pillaging the chapel.

l. 185, chrysolite, a precious stone usually yellowish-green, sometimes almost white.

l. 230, One near one is too far. The emphasis is on "near." To be near is not enough.

l. 237, the powers, *sc.* of Nature.

HOW IT STRIKES A CONTEMPORARY (p. 42).

First appeared in *Men and Women* (1855).

The poem is a character-sketch of an entirely imaginary Spanish poet, who, like many other poets, is misunderstood by his neighbours. There are autobiographical touches in the poem, though not many; see, for instance, l. 79.

l. 6, conscientious still. Apparently, still carefully repaired and brushed.

l. 7, have worn it. Supply "before him."

l. 20, ferrel, usually spelt "ferule."

l. 30, broad-edge, with broad margin.

l. 48, tang, a taste or smack.

l. 68, Too far above my people. Supply "thou who art." The King is supposed to say this to the spy. There is, however, a double meaning; and the King stands for God. See note to l. 103.

l. 70, Forget them. Don't bother about their wishes.

l. 79, third house by the bridge. Mrs Orr identifies this with No. 19 Warwick Crescent, where Browning went to live at the end of 1861 (*Life of Browning*, p. 255).

l. 90, the Corregidor. Before the Revolution the chief magistrate of a Spanish town was usually appointed by the King, and was called Corregidor.

l. 92, lacquered breeches. Apparently, with breeches of varnished leather.

l. 96, memorised the miracle in vogue, announced the occurrence of some recent miracle, doubtless wrought by the intercession of a saint, whose statue or relics could be venerated in one of the churches of Valladolid. Thus he "gave each church a turn."

l. 102, truckle-bed. A truckle-bed is a small bedstead on wheels which can be pushed under a larger one. Such a bed was occupied by a servant or fag. The word *truckle* originated in University

slang from the Lat. *trochlea*, a little wheel (Skeat). Compare the phrase "to truckle under."

l. 103, heavenly manner of relieving guard. God's way of dismissing His soldiers from their duty. Here Browning let us clearly see the inner meaning. The gossips of the town of Valladolid are not so far wrong. The poet is one of "God's spies."

l. 115, the Prado. Most Spanish towns have a Prado (originally a meadow), a place of meeting and recreation.

ANDREA DEL SARTO (p. 45).

This poem first appeared in *Men and Women* (1855). Browning got his materials for it from the pages of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*, published in 1550. Vasari, himself a painter, had been a pupil of Andrea del Sarto.

Browning's poem is "a 'translation into song' of the picture called 'Andrea del Sarto and his Wife,' now in the Pitti Palace, Florence." This is the picture in that gallery numbered 118, which is undoubtedly not by Andrea. Mr Ernest Radford recognised it as the source of the poem; and when asked, Browning allowed that it was so. See Furnivall, *Browning's Bibliography*, i. 160-161. A photograph of this picture may be seen in the *Illustrations to Browning's Poems*, published by the Browning Society in 1882. It shows two half-length figures; the woman, who is strikingly beautiful, is on the left of the picture, the man's right hand rests on her right shoulder, and in her left hand she holds an opened letter.

Andrea was born in Florence in the year 1486. Modern investigation shows that his name was not Vannuchi, but d'Agnolo; the name by which he is generally known is derived from the fact that he was a tailor's son (del Sarto). He studied under several Florentine painters, among them Piero da Cosimo, whom readers of *Romola* will remember. He acquired a great reputation, executing amongst other work many frescoes in the Church of the Annunziata, the church of the Servite order in Florence. In 1512 he married Lucrezia del Fede, the widow of a capmaker or hatter named Recanati. She was a woman of great beauty, but, according to Vasari, who knew her well, a bad wife. In 1518 Andrea went to France, on the invitation of King Francis the First. But his wife, who remained behind, begged him to return home, and he accordingly obtained leave of absence. Francis loaded him with presents, and entrusted him with a large sum of money to buy pictures. This money he spent on himself and friends; he built a house, and gave large presents to his wife's relatives, and lived extravagantly. After this he feared to return to France. He

then went on painting in Florence until the time of his death in 1531, at the age of forty-five. His wife, says Vasari, neglected him during his last illness, from fear of infection.

He was called by his contemporaries "Andrea senza errore," or the faultless. He was an admirable draughtsman, and his pictures are well designed; the colour, if not strikingly fine, is usually pleasant; he had a fine sense of beauty and dignity. At the same time, his Madonnas and Josephs are often wanting, both in religious feeling and in intellectual character.

The time of the poem is 1525, towards the close of Andrea's short life, when he was not quite forty. It is a wonderful picture of a great artist who has spoilt his aims through an intense, but unideal, love for a beautiful woman. There is something almost disgusting in his worship of the mere physical beauty of Lucrezia.

Andrea was so passionately fond of Lucrezia that he painted her constantly; she often sat as his model for madonnas and saints, but, even when she did not, it is said he unconsciously gave to his model the face of the idolized wife. It is only fair to remember that we owe the dark account of her character to Vasari alone, who, as her husband's apprentice, may have had much to suffer from her temper. And even he, it should be noticed, does not make against her the charges which Browning has popularized. He describes her as being both artful and violent, an unusual combination of qualities, rather than as being unfaithful or even frivolous. He says, indeed, that "she delighted in trapping the hearts of men" (this was before her marriage with Andrea), and adds that Andrea was jealous of her, but neither of these statements amounts to very much, even if true. Vasari accuses her of self-will and neglect, of undue regard for the interests of her family, as opposed to those of her husband, and of using evil words and spiteful actions towards Andrea's pupils. He says that the painter's friends deserted him in consequence of her behaviour. But he does not allege want of feminine virtue in the more specific sense of the term. It is only fair to say this much in defence of a lady whose reputation has been unfairly taken away three hundred years after her death. The student should consult Vasari's *Lives*, translated by Mrs Forster (Bohn's Standard Library), vol. iii. The passages in the first edition of Vasari, which were afterwards omitted, are given in the footnotes. But the value of Browning's magnificent study of character is, of course, quite independent of the truth or of untruth of the story which at first suggested it; in the same way as the value of Shakespeare's historical plays is not diminished if John of Gaunt is shown to have been a self-seeker, or Richard III. is shown not to have been a fiendish tyrant.

1. 5, friend's friend. The friend of some gallant of Lucrezia's has given Andrea a commission.

l. 7, accept to. The verb "accept" is never followed by "to." This is an undoubted misprint introduced in the later editions. The original volume (1855) has "too."

l. 8, this small hand. If we may judge from the pictures, Lucrezia had a very beautiful hand.

l. 15, Fiesole. A small town on a hill about three miles north of Florence.

l. 26, My serpentine beauty. This suggests the lithe grace of Lucrezia, and her reptile-like nature. Andrea's fondness for her subsists side by side with a knowledge of her infidelity.

l. 31, is looked on by in turn. The subject here appears to be "everybody." If it be "which," there is no fresh statement in l. 31; it simply repeats l. 30 in the passive voice. Perhaps Andrea was going to say, "while she looks only to me as her sun," but, aware of the grotesque falsity of it, says instead, "no one's." As it is, Lucrezia smiles cynically.

l. 49, we are in God's hand. Cf. below, p. 91, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, l. 4, with note p. 161. The feeble and doting Andrea finds consolation in the same pious formula as Ben Ezra. He ascribes his career, with its dishonesty and partial failure and his matrimonial infelicities, to the will of God.

l. 65, the Legate's talk. Some praise of Andrea's work, such as he used to hear in France.

l. 68, No sketches first. Vasari is apparently Browning's authority. "When he drew the different objects from nature which he proposed to use in his works, it was his custom, for the most part, to sketch them but very slightly; since then few memoranda sufficed him, although when the object in question was executed in the painting he completed it to the utmost perfection. His drawings therefore were rather used as memorials to remind him of what he had seen, than as copies to be imitated exactly for the representations depicted in his work." (Mrs Foster's transl.)

l. 78, Well, less is more. The Greeks said the same thing, the half is sometimes greater than the whole. In this particular case Browning means that partly unsuccessful effort is worthier than the completed work which costs less struggle. Achievement is not the best measure of merit. Compare *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, stanzas v.-vii. (p. 108).

l. 80, In their vexed beating. Commas must be understood after "vexed" and "beating."

l. 93, Morello's outline. Morello is a mountain, not a painter. It rises to a height of about 3000 feet on a spur of the Apennines that runs to the north of Florence, from which Morello is only six or seven miles distant.

l. 98, Or what's a heaven for. This is practically Kant's argu-

ment in favour of a future life. Compare *Abt Vogler*, stanzas ix., x. (p. 105 above).

l. 99, the worse ! So much the worse.

l. 105, *The Urbinate*. Raffaello Santi (1483-1520), who was born at Urbino in Umbria, and became one of the most illustrious, if not the greatest, of the Italian painters. His Madonnas, above all the "Madonna di San Sisto," have always been admired as supreme in their kind. His great frescoes in some of the apartments of the Vatican (*Stanza della Segnatura* and the *Stanza d' Eliodoro*) are less successful. There has been, during the last half century, somewhat of a re-action against the exaggerated praise of the past, and an inclination to accept the verdict of Michel Angelo that he owed more to study than to nature.

l. 106, *George Vasari* (1512-1574). The author of the *Lives of the most eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1550). He was himself a painter, and had been the pupil of Andrea del Sarto (see p. 132 above) and of Michel Angelo.

l. 110, it gives way. "It" is, of course, his art.

l. 117, Out of me. It is beyond me.

l. 129, by the future. Compared with the future.

l. 130, Agnolo. Michelangelo or Michelagnolo Buonarroti (1475-1564). The form Agnolo alone is not correct. He signed his own name "Michelagnolo." He was the sublimest genius of the Italian Renaissance,—painter, sculptor, architect, poet, and mystic.

l. 141, compensates. The accent in *compensate*, *contemplate*, etc., was formerly on the second syllable.

l. 143, something. Somewhat, as in Shakespeare.

l. 146, the Paris lords. The French nobles who knew of Andrea's dishonesty to King Francis.

l. 160, frank French eyes. Notice that *French* and *frank* are really at bottom the same word. They come from the old German *franko*, a free man, a Frank, through the Low Latin *francus*.

l. 161, Profuse. Lavish, liberal.

my hand kept plying, my hand was kept at work. To *ply* means to toil at ; it comes through the French from the Latin *plicare*, to bend.

l. 170, grange, barn.

l. 178, The triumph was. Andrea seems to mean that "the greatest pleasure connected with successful achievement as a painter would have been to gain your heart. Well, I gained your heart before achieving all I was capable of ; surely, I have not lost anything."

l. 184, Said one day Agnolo. Miss Jacob tells us that the story is told in Bocchi's *Le Bellezze di Firenze*, edited by Cinelli, p. 461.

Hermann Grimm, in his *Life of Michael Angelo*, refers to it, and expresses his disbelief (Burnett's trans., ii. 46).

l. 199, What he? The reference is, of course, back to line 184 *seq.*

l. 210, cue-owls. The *chiu* owls have a plaintive and monotonous cry. The scientific name is *scops giu*, and specimens have occasionally been found in the British Isles.

l. 212, little house. Built out of King Francis' money.

l. 220, The Cousin. *Cugino* is used as a euphemism for lover, admirer.

l. 241, thirteen scudi. A scudo was the Italian equivalent of a crown—say, 4 or 5 shillings. Like the French *écu*, the name comes from the Latin *scutum*, a shield.

There seems no object in the inversion which begins the line; "get you" appears to be the present, with future meaning.

l. 250, died of want. Vasari several times charges Andrea with neglecting his own father and mother, while he gave large sums to Lucrezia's. He "did nothing for his own parents, whom he would not even see, and who, at the end of a certain period, ended their lives in great poverty and misery" (Bohn edition, iii. 206, note).

l. 263, Meted, measured. *Of*. Revelation of St John, xxi. 15.

l. 264, Leonard. Lionardo da Vinci (c. 1452-1519), another of the greatest Florentine painters, whose most famous work is the "Last Supper," at Milan.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL (p. 53).

The poem first appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855.

Fano is a town of nine or ten thousand inhabitants, on the Adriatic, some thirty miles to the north of Ancona. It was a Roman city, and a temple here celebrated the great victory of the Romans on the Metaurus, 207 B.C., when Hasdrubal, the brother of Hannibal, was defeated and slain. The picture which so impressed Browning is in the church of St Augustine. A photograph will be found in *Illustrations to Browning's Poems*, published by the Browning Society. A tall angel, with wings partially extended, seems to encourage a kneeling child, represented as nude, to pray. The child is on the angel's left hand, and kneels on a cubical block of stone. Both gaze upward to the left of the picture, where the sky seems opening (see l. 16), and a group of three cherubs is seen. Like many other paintings which have appealed most strongly to literary men, it has not any very great merit.

The painter's proper name was Barbieri, but, like so many illustrious Italians, he is better known by a nickname, in his case *Georgino*, the squinter. He was born in 1590, near Bologna;

and died in 1666. His masterpiece is the Burial of Santa Petronilla, the legendary daughter of St Peter.

On the Guardian Angels in art, see Mrs Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art*, vol. i.

l. 17, *For I should have*. The Poet would look not directly at Heaven, but would prefer to look at the face of the angel.

l. 18, *Thou bird of God*. Browning gets this from Dante. Compare *Purgatorio*, iv. 129, and iv. 4.

l. 25, *which too much thought expands*. The brain does actually grow larger through education and thought. The whole stanza expresses a desire for calm after intellectual effort and strife.

l. 37, *Alfred*. This is Alfred Domett, a great friend of Browning, the son of one of Nelson's captains. He was called to the bar, went to New Zealand for thirty years, and became a member of the New Zealand Parliament. "This Mr Domett seems to have been a very modest man, besides a devoted friend of Robert Browning's, and on occasion a warm defender of his works. When he read the apostrophe to 'Alfred, dear friend,' in the *Guardian Angel*, he had reached the last line before it occurred to him that the person invoked could be he. I do not think that this poem, and that directly addressed to him under the name of 'Waring,' were the only ones inspired by the affectionate remembrance which he had left in their author's mind" (Mrs Orr's *Life of Browning*, pp. 48, 49).

l. 42, *And he was left*. "He" is, of course, the angel.

l. 43, *We were at Fano*. Browning and his wife were at Fano for three days in the summer of 1849. "We found it uninhabitable," says Mrs Browning, "from the heat, vegetation scorched into paleness, the very air simmering in the sun." She adds, "yet the churches are very beautiful, and a divine picture of Guercino's is worth going all that way to see" (Mrs Orr's *Life of Browning*, pp. 159, 160; *Letters of Mrs Browning*, i. 380).

l. 48, *for a dower, for a gift*. Dower, in its strict sense, means in English law the right of a widow to have for life the income arising from a third part of all lands and houses possessed by her husband; in the Civil Law it means the marriage portion brought by the wife to her husband. From this second meaning, it has come to signify any gift or endowment, whether real or metaphorical.

l. 55, *Wairoa*. A river in North Island, New Zealand.

l. 56, *Ancona*. After leaving Fano, Mr and Mrs Browning went for a week to Ancona.

A GRAMMARIAN'S FUNERAL (p. 55).

The poem appeared in *Men and Women*, 1855.

When the study of Greek was revived in Italy at the beginning of the 15th century, an immense amount of labour and enthusiasm

was devoted to collecting and copying manuscripts, translating them, and ascertaining the rules of the language. "Though," says Hallam, "it is necessary to point out the deficiencies of classical erudition at this time, lest the reader should hastily conclude that the praises bestowed upon it are less relative to the previous state of ignorance, and the difficulty with which that generation had to labour, than they really are, this cannot affect our admiration and gratitude towards men, who, by their diligence and ardour in acquiring and communicating knowledge, excited that thirst for improvement and laid those foundations of it, which rendered the ensuing age so glorious in the annals of literature" (*Literature of Europe*, i. 104). Browning's *Grammarians* has been a pedant with a very limited outlook, but he has done good service to himself and to humanity in solving some of the minutiae of Greek syntax. On the poet's belief that all good thoughts, feelings, and acts, although they may fail to have their complete position here, are yet of permanent value, and are not destined to perish, compare stanzas ix. and x.; *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, stanzas xxiv., xxv.

The rhythm is rather odd, though perfectly regular. Scan the lines thus:—

— √ | √ — | √ — | √ — | √ —
— √ | √ — √

- l. 3, *crofts*, small fields adjoining a house; *thorpes*, hamlets.
- l. 4, in its tether, like animals fastened by a rope to their place.
- l. 8, *Rimming the rock-row*, edging the line of rocks or mountains.
- A bad instance of Browning's use of awkward, unnatural construction, and grotesque rhyme. See Introduction, p. xxiv, and compare lines 73, 98, 112, 144, etc., in this poem.
- l. 14, *sepulture*. The accent on the second syllable is unusual.
- l. 22, *Wait ye the warning?* Apparently, the signal to start.
- l. 25, *'Ware the beholders*. Beware, there are beholders.
- l. 27, *famous calm and dead*. It would be better to insert a comma after *famous*, though this does not occur in any edition.
- l. 37, *The little touch*. Presumably, of disease or accident. Youth vanished just in the same way as autumn sometimes passes suddenly into winter with a single frosty night.
- l. 43, *He knew the signal*. "The little touch" served as a signal for greater effort and diligence.
- l. 48, *Show me their shaping*. Show me what poets and philosophers have to tell me about Man. "Their shaping" is awkward, and appears to mean what picture they have drawn of Man.
- l. 50, *he gowned him*. He put on his scholar's gown; he adopted more and more the manners of the scholar.
- l. 51, *that book*. Either (1) the book of man, or (2) what the poets and sages have learned about man.

- l. 64, queasy, sick, inclined to vomit.
- l. 72, Ere mortar dab brick. Compare Introduction, p. xxiv, on Browning's versification.
- l. 86, Calculus, stone in the bladder.
- l. 88, Tussis, cough.
- l. 95, soul-hydroptic, having a dropsy of the soul. The disease is often accompanied by intense thirst.
- l. 110, or earth's failure. Cf. 1 Cor. xv. 19, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable."
- l. 113, seeks a little thing to do. Compare *Andrea del Sarto*, lines 96, 97.
- l. 122, Let the world mind him. Let the world look after him ; which of course it cannot do.
- l. 127, Thro' the rattle, the death rattle in his throat.
- rife, abundant. A word of Icelandic origin (*ri/r*), which occurs in Middle English (Skeat).
- l. 129, Hoti's business. He showed whilst on his deathbed the right way to use the Greek particles *ὅτι*, *ὅθεν* and *ὅε*.
- l. 131, enclitic De. A word is called enclitic when it is joined to the word it follows. Compare the Latin—*que*.
- l. 134, purlieus. Properly the parts adjacent to a royal forest. If beasts of chase escaped from the forest into the purlieus, the owners of the purlieus might take them, but, as against any one else, the King's right in them remained. See Burns, "Justice," *Game*, ii. 219. The original form of the word was *puralee* (a forth-going), and the *lieu* was introduced by confusion.

THE BISHOP ORDERS HIS TOMB AT ST PRAXED'S CHURCH (p. 59).

This poem was originally printed in *Hood's Magazine* in March 1845 (vol. iii. p. 237 *seq.*). It was reprinted in *Dramatis Personæ* (1845).

"I know no other piece of modern English prose or poetry in which there is so much told of the Renaissance spirit—in its worldliness, inconsistency, pride, hypocrisy, ignorance of itself, love of art, of luxury, and of good Latin" (Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Part V. chap. xx. § 34). The Bishop is a type of the paganised ecclesiastics of the age of Alexander VI. and Leo X., men who, having lost all faith in Christianity, yet cared too little about religion and too much about art and letters to make any protest against the old superstitions and the old abuses. St Praxed's Church may or may not be the church of Sta Prassede at Rome. There was little affection between the Renaissance prelates of those days and their provincial sees.

l. 1, **Vanity.** Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, i. 2.

l. 5, **Old Gandolf.** The Bishop's ancient rival and predecessor in the see.

l. 16, **my niche.** A suitable place for his tomb. The Renaissance prelates were very careful about their monuments. Thus Pope Julius II. began to make arrangements for his mausoleum directly he was elevated to the papal throne (1503), and invited Michelangelo to design it. It is said that half the piazza of Saint Peter's was covered with the marbles which he accumulated. The tomb was not completed till 1550, thirty-seven years after the Pope's death, and then in a less magnificent way than Julius and Michelangelo originally proposed. Our own Cardinal Wolsey had made arrangements for his tomb, and the sarcophagus he had prepared, after being laid aside unused for centuries, now forms part of Nelson's tomb at St Paul's Cathedral.

l. 18, **Shrewd was that snatch.** His seizure of the corner in the south side of the church was clever.

l. 25, **basalt.** An igneous rock of a grey or black colour, hard and compact in texture.

l. 26, **tabernacle.** The canopy over the tomb. Nearly all mediæval and Renaissance tombs of any pretension were arched over.

l. 29, **Peach-blossom marble.** This is the marble called *fior di persico* by the Italians, a beautiful mixture of grey and red shades of colour.

l. 30, **of a mighty pulse.** This suggests comparison of the marble with blood.

l. 31, **onion-stone.** A kind of white marble marked with green. It is called *cipollino* by the Italians, from the word *cipolla* (onion), which the markings are supposed to resemble. It belongs to what is called the concretionary type of marbles, so the chief markings are circular and oval.

l. 33, **how I earned the prize.** The Bishop evidently feels some remorse for the manner in which he acquired the peach-blossom marble. But he does not make it quite clear whether it was this, or the *lapis lazuli*, which he stole and secreted during the fire in his church.

l. 41, **olive-frail.** A rush basket for holding olives. See p. 126, note to l. 47.

l. 42, **lapis lazuli.** A bright blue stone, which takes a good polish, found in various parts of Asia, and much used by the Egyptians, Greeks, and other ancient peoples for ornaments. It is of considerable value. The word *lazuli* (like our word *azure*) is a corruption of *lājward*, the Arabic name for the stone.

l. 46, **Frascati.** A small town on the Alban Hills, about 15 miles from Rome, adorned with many beautiful villas, and a

favourite resort of the people of Rome during the heat of summer.

l. 47, between my knees. That is, of course, the knees of the effigy.

l. 48, God the Father's globe. In Italian pictures of the Renaissance period, God the Father is often represented as a venerable old man holding a globe, usually blue in colour, as a sign of sovereignty over the universe.

l. 49, the Jesu Church. *Il Gesu* is the principal church of the Jesuits at Rome. It dates from 1575. In the chapel of St Ignatius is the marble group of the Trinity by Ludovisi, to which the Bishop refers. "The globe over the altar was said to be the largest mass of lapis lazuli known; but it is now ascertained to be made up of pieces" (Murray's *Guide to Rome*).

l. 54, antique-black. *Nero antico*, a beautiful black marble.

l. 55, frieze, a broad horizontal band of sculpture or ornament.

Note the mixture of heathen and Christian symbols and figures which are to be placed in the bas-relief.

l. 58, thyrsus, a staff twined with vine and ivy-shoots, and surmounted by a pine cone, carried at the feast of Bacchus.

l. 60, Saint Praxed in a glory. Saint Praxed or Praxedis was a virgin martyr whose church was celebrated among the Roman churches as early as the fourth century. The "acts" of her martyrdom are, however, so worthless that it is impossible to disentangle the residuum of truth which may possibly underlie the story. She is commemorated in the Roman Martyrology on July 21. The supposed date of her martyrdom is the middle of the second century.

"A glory" means a nimbus or halo round the head.

l. 66, travertine, a limestone deposited by the water of calcareous springs, common in Italy. It is porous and apt to hold water, though it wears well in the climate of Rome; the outer walls of both the Colosseum and St Peter's are built of it. Compare, "The moulder on the damp wall's travertine," in Browning's *Pictor Ignotus*.

l. 69, jasper. Supposed to be allied to quartz; a stone which has many different colours.

l. 72, plenty jasper, plentiful jasper. Plenty, as a noun, is derived from Latin *plenitas* through the Old French *plente*. It is, however, sometimes used as an adjective, and in this sense may come from the old French *plentif*.

l. 77, Tully's every word. Every word the purest Latin, as used by Tully (Marcus Tullius Cicero).

During the Renaissance, Cicero was the model of Latin style, whom all Italian scholars attempted to imitate. They rejected any word which was not to be found in their exemplar. For particulars, cf.

Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, i. 329. Their excessive attention to purity of diction was ridiculed by Erasmus in his *Ciceronianus*.

l. 79, *Ulpian*. Domitius Ulpianus, a great Latin jurist, who wrote a large number of works on law. He died in the reign of Alexander Severus, 228 A.D.

l. 82, *God made and eaten all day long*. A crude expression of the Catholic doctrine, that in the Mass or Eucharist the consecrated elements become the Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The old half-pagan Bishop states the doctrine in a way which would probably be repudiated by all modern Roman theologians.

Low masses are often said during the whole morning in great Cathedral churches, but not "all day long." It is uncanonical to begin a mass after noon, except on special occasions.

l. 89, *mortcloth*, a sheet laid over a dead body.

The strange fancy, of which at first he recognises it only as fancy, at last gets almost complete possession of the Bishop. See note to l. 111.

l. 95, *Saint Praxed at his sermon on the mount*. See ll. 59-60. The Bishop's memory now plays him false, and he mixes up Christ and the saint. But it looks, too, as though Browning had forgotten that Saint Praxed was a female saint. See last page, note to l. 60.

l. 99, *elucescebat*. The inchoative verb *elucesco*, meaning to begin to shine forth, to become illustrious, is not found in classical Latin. Forcellini gives instances from the Vulgate, Lactantius, and St Augustine.

l. 103, *ever*, always.

l. 106, *my impoverished frieze*, frieze less rich than I originally designed it to be.

l. 108, *a vizor and a Term*. A vizor is the covering for the face attached to a mediæval helmet, but seems here used for a classic mask (*persona*), such as was worn by actors, which was often employed in Renaissance decorative work.

A term is a head and bust surmounting a square column, like the images of the God Terminus.

l. 109, *lynx*. The lynx was associated with Bacchus, whose chariot was sometimes represented as drawn by several of these animals.

l. 111, *entablature*. Properly, all the horizontal portion of a building supported on the columns. Here used simply for the slab of the tomb.

The Bishop, in his dreamy state, identifies himself still alive and conscious with the effigy of himself on the tomb.

l. 115, *Gritstone*, coarse sandstone.

AN EPISTLE (p. 62).

This poem first appeared in *Men and Women* (1855).

The Arab physician Karshish, his master, Abib, and their lord, the magician who lived in the pyramid, are purely imaginary characters. It is needless to dwell on the clearly marked features of the travelling sage, his alert interest in plants and animals, drugs, men, diseases, and everything else having any connection with medicine; his fondness for technical terms and other unusual words; his habit of scepticism which struggles with the strange fascination of the story of Lazarus; his impatience with the ignorance and conceit of the native Jewish practitioners; his amiably distorted account of the death of Christ and the circumstance that accompanied it.

l. 12, *before the term*, before its appointed limit of time.

l. 14, *such, sc.*, the "pricks and cracks" mentioned in l. 9.

l. 17, *snakestone*. Various substances have been used as a remedy for snake-bite by natives of serpent-haunted countries. The native medicine-men and witch-doctors, who sell them, call them "stones," but, on examination, they usually prove to be pieces of animal-charcoal, such as charred bone, and they have no value whatever as antidotes. Probably Karshish has in view a piece of *bezoar*, a concretion found in the stomachs of goats and antelopes, usually formed by phosphate of lime. The name *bezoar* is said to come ultimately from the Persian *pad-zoar*, an antidote or poison-expeller. The substance is still valued in the East.

l. 22, *Thus I resume*. Karshish continues his notes of his journey, from where his previous letter finished.

l. 28, *Vespasian cometh*. Vespasian began his operations against the Jews, who were in open revolt, in 67 A.D. His son Titus had a command under him. After Vespasian became Emperor in 69 Titus continued the war, and began the siege of Jerusalem in the spring of 70.

The date of this letter is thus fixed as about 67-70.

l. 36, *Bethany*. The village is about 2 miles south-east of Jerusalem. Notice the professional manner of computing the distance, which seems a good deal forced.

l. 40, *void the stuffing, etc.* To empty what I have collected in my traveller's wallet, and tell you what I have discovered in Judæa.

l. 41, *a viscid choler*. Choler meant originally bile. It is now only used in the metaphorical sense, for the passion of anger which was formerly believed to be due to excess of bile. He means that the bile is observed to be sticky.

1. 43, *tertians*. In agues (which are fevers of the malarial type) the attacks occur at regular intervals. If they occur every other day, the agues are called tertians.

1. 45, *wots, knows*. The present of the M.E. verb *witen* (A.S. *witan*), to know.

1. 45, *there's a spider*. Dr Berdoe says, on the authority of Dr M'Cook (the author of a standard work on North American spiders), that this must have been one of the "Wandering" group of spiders. They spin no webs and hunt their prey. The Zebra spider (*Epiblemum scenicum*) is one of these, and otherwise answers to the description of Karshish. Spiders were an important feature in early medical practice.

1. 49, *runagate*. Corrupted form of *renegade*. Here, perhaps, simply a deceitful scoundrel. Compare *Pilgrim's Progress*, where Judge Hate-good calls Faithful "Thou, runagate, heretic, and traitor."

1. 50, *payeth me a sublimate*. Supply "for" after "me." A sublimate is a very fine powder produced by raising a solid substance to a state of vapour and allowing it to condense; e.g., "flowers of sulphur."

1. 55, *gum-tragacanth*. A gum from a small Oriental shrub, of no medicinal value, but largely used to stiffen fabrics, and to give consistency to pills, lozenges, etc.

1. 57, *the porphyry*, the mortar for pounding up drugs, made of porphyry.

1. 59, *crossing so with leprosy*, taking ambiguous forms allied to leprosy.

1. 60, *admired*. The word here retains somewhat of its original meaning, wondered at.

Zoar. The name of a city mentioned several times in the Bible, the site of which cannot now be identified.

1. 67, *tang*. Wright (*Provincial Dictionary*) gives *sting* as one meaning of the word *tang*, and supports it by a quotation from Quarles,

"Feels neither tang of grief nor fears the smart
Of jealous doubts."

The more usual meaning is a slight but unpleasant taste.

1. 79, *subinduced*. This must mean brought about indirectly and unobtrusively. The Dictionaries, however, do not appear to recognise any other meaning of "subinduce" than to insinuate, or suggest indirectly.

1. 82, *exhibition, administration*. A technical word in medicine.

1. 83, *exorcisation*. More usually, exorcism; the expulsion of evil spirits from the bodies of persons they were supposed to take possession of.

l. 89, *conceit*, a notion, especially a fanciful or far-fetched notion. *Conceit* is a French and Middle English form of Lat. *conceptum*, anything conceived; probably influenced somewhat in its meaning by the Italian *concelto*.

l. 93, *Attaineth*, is strong enough to.

At the beginning of the next line supply "which."

l. 100, *a Nazarene physician*. This is, of course, Jesus Christ. For the Bible account of the miracle see the Gospel of St John, chap. xi.

l. 103, *Not, that such a fume*. It is not of daily occurrence that such a baseless fancy, a mere fume of the imagination, should absolutely saturate his whole being.

l. 107, *how he takes up*, how he conducts the rest of his life.

l. 108, *The man*. The sentence is broken off and is left unfinished. Line 116 takes up the train of thought interrupted by the long parenthesis.

l. 137, *The golden mean*. The phrase comes from Horace "*Auream quisque mediocritatem Diligit*" (Od. II., x. 5). The idea is much older, and can be traced back in Greek thought as far as Cleobulus, one of the Seven Sages, who lived about 600 B.C.

l. 160, *For scarce abatement*, scarcely for abatement.

l. 166, *object, sc.*, "if you object that it is only a word."

l. 174, *Thou and the child*. The sentence is apparently intended to suggest what Lazarus might say to the objector. For "the child," compare lines 159-165.

l. 177, *Greek fire*. A liquid material which burned very fiercely and could not be extinguished by water, employed in warfare; apparently first used by the Greeks against the Saracens, towards the end of the seventh century after Christ. The mention of it by Karshish is therefore an anachronism.

l. 179, *It is the life*, etc. It is the life he is obliged to lead.

l. 184, *as this*, as the law of this life is known to him.

l. 188, *what is right and wrong*. Lazarus in his premature spiritual development has acquired some of the instincts of the eternal life, which do not fit in with the needs of this transitory existence. The great facts to which they refer are represented as running "across" the path of this mortal life, which traverses the wide glories of the everlasting light like a black thread.

l. 193, *His sage*. Jesus Christ. See St John's Gospel, xi. 43.

l. 197, *sedulous, diligent, steady*. From Latin *sedulus* (from *sedeo*).

l. 203, *prone*, lying on his face.

l. 205, *'Sayeth*. Supply *he*.

l. 215, *Make proselytes*. A proselyte was originally a Gentile who accepted Judaism. Christ accused the hypocritical "Scribes and Pharisees" of "compassing sea and land to make one proselyte," not

for the sake of his higher moral and spiritual development, but for mere party zeal. The term was afterwards applied to converts to any religion.

l. 240, *sublimed*. See p. 144 (note to line 50).

l. 247, *leech*, medical man, physician (A.S. *læce*, a healer, from which comes also the name of the blood-sucking worm used in medicine).

l. 252, *fell*, *befel*.

l. 253, *Prefiguring*, as soon appeared. The earthquake which occurred at Christ's death was, thinks Karshish, a portent foretelling the death of the hermit-sage and magician.

l. 281, *borage*. This plant, now used only as a flavouring (or garnish) for claret cup and similar beverages, was once a favourite medicinal herb. It was supposed to act as a cordial. There is an old rhyme, "I borage, bring courage."

l. 299, *ambiguous*, of doubtful character.

l. 308, *See it in myself*. See the same face as thine own in Me.

l. 309, *nor mayst conceive, nor canst thou conceive* concerning what is My nature.

The human soul is incapable of understanding God, but it can love Him.

CLEON (p. 71).

First appeared in *Men and Women* (1855).

Cleon and Protus are imaginary characters, but they are typical of thoughtful men who lived about the middle of the first century of our era. The old mythologies were no longer believed; the creed of the philosopher was often, as here, a mysticism held in check by the Greek traditions of fidelity to the rational. Such minds were prepared to receive Christianity, with its reconciliation of Oriental and Hellenic modes of thought and feeling. Alike in his gentle despair and his mild hopefulness, Cleon is unwittingly preparing the way for the new faith.

The letters of Karshish and of Cleon form an interesting parallel. Both sketch the effect of the conditions which marked the rise of Christianity on minds of a positive and sceptical type. In both we have the record of actual contact with the new religion. The differences are no less marked. The student could not do better than carefully analyse the lines of thought which the Oriental and the Hellenic thinker respectively followed, the assumptions from which they start and the conclusions to which they attain.

The quotation at the head of the poem is from the Acts of the Apostles, xvii. 28. St Paul, preaching on the Areopagus, after alluding to the altar he had seen dedicated to the Unknown God,

teaches the omnipresence of God and appeals to their own literature. "As certain, also, of your own poets have said, 'For we are also his offspring.'" The quotation is taken from the *Phenomena* of Aratus, a very popular didactic poet who "flourished" about 280-270 B.C. According to a doubtful account he was a native of St Paul's own city Tarsus, in Cilicia; at anyrate he was a Cilician.

l. 1, the sprinkled isles. The Sporades (from *σπορὰς*, sprinkled, scattered) were the islands of the Aegean Sea lying off the coast of Ionia and Caria between Samos and Rhodes.

l. 4, Tyranny, kingdom. The unlimited rule of one person, not resting on a constitutional basis (even if wise and gentle), was called by the Greeks a tyranny, whether the one person was called a king or not.

l. 13, my nation's work and gift. The art of making mosaics is very ancient, and may have been of Oriental origin. It was commenced in Greece and the Grecian cities of Asia Minor several centuries before Christ.

l. 15, lyric woman, singing-woman.

l. 16, sea-wools. "Halourgos, sea-wrought; was a favourite epithet for dress-material among the Greeks. It referred, however, to the dye, the costly Tyrian purple obtained from the marine gasteropod (*Murex*), and not to the wool. As the vest is already described as Krokotos [*Orcus*], the saffron colour of state garments, the term sea-wool is inappropriate" (Dr Hill).

However, Miss Stoddart suggests to me that "crocus" may mean purple and not yellow. The wild crocus of the South is usually purple; and as the murex dyed every shade from deep crimson through the purples to pale blue, the robe may be crocus-purple in hue and yet be dyed with the Tyrian sea-dye.

l. 17, the strainer and the cup. A silver or bronze strainer was often employed to filter the wine; ice or snow was sometimes placed in it. See Dictionary of Antiquities, art. *Colum*.

l. 22, for him, whose song. Cleon himself.

l. 23, nor call. Supply "shall men" before "call." He means that men shall see in you something more than a king who merely keeps in view the commonplace needs of life, by the exercise of kingly authority, and so on.

l. 35, Thou first of men. That thou, mightiest before all other men, might see the sunrise. There is no need to suppose a play on the name Protus, for *Prôtos*, first.

l. 42, the eventual element of calm, the furthestmost atmosphere of calm, the divine æther in which the Gods live.

l. 47, epos. Narrative poem in heroic verse. Cleon had achieved success in all kinds of poetry, from the serious epic to the sailor's song.

l. 51, the phare, the lighthouse probably at the mouth of the

harbour. From Pharos, an island off the mouth of the Nile, on which such a lighthouse stood.

l. 53, the *Pœcile*, a painted colonnade (Greek, *Stoa Pœcile*, the painted porch). Not of course the *Stoa Pœcile* at Athens (as Dr Berdoe suggests), famous for the teaching of Zeno, but some similar building in the unnamed city over which Protus ruled.

l. 60, moods, the *modi* or scales of ancient music.

l. 61, All arts are mine. In periods of great artistic energy such men as Cleon have existed. To go no further back, there was Leonardo da Vinci, who was engineer, architect, sculptor, painter, musician, poet, mathematician, and anatomist.

l. 68, One mind-point, one aspect of our mind.

l. 69, Compares. Supply the subject "who."

l. 77, As a great whole. This is a favourite doctrine with Browning. Compare *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, ll. 5-6.

l. 79, How shall a certain part. The sentence originally begun (l. 73) is left grammatically unfinished. The connection is easy to see, however: How shall a certain part of what we call this life be effaced by another part?

l. 83, rhomb. A rhomb or rhombus is a lozenge, though Browning seems to think they are different.

l. 84, trapezoid, any four-sided figure which is not rectangular and has not both its opposite pairs of sides parallel.

l. 93, Mankind. Put in plain prose order: "The labour ends in such a synthesis as Mankind, a whole made up of all the separate men."

l. 95, of old time. The accent falls on "of."

l. 115, wrote the fiction. Supply "and" before this.

l. 126, the latent everywhere. Supply the words "to be." This vague form of Pantheism was very general among the Platonists and Stoics. There is an echo of it in the very passage of the Acts of the Apostles from which Browning has taken his motto for the poem (xvii. 28).

l. 132, savage-tasted drupe, a wild plum, such as the sloe. A Drupe is the botanical name for any kind of stone fruit, such as a plum. It should not therefore be used in antithesis to plum.

l. 140, Terpander. A very early Greek poet who greatly improved the lyre by increasing the strings from four to seven. He died about 650 B.C., and is reckoned the founder of Greek music.

l. 141, Phidias and his friend. Phidias (died about 432 B.C.), the great Athenian sculptor, whose greatest surviving works are the sculptures of the Parthenon.

"His friend" is probably Polygnotus, the celebrated painter, who also lived at Athens, and decorated with paintings some of the buildings designed by Phidias. But I know of no direct evidence

that Polygnotus was the friend of Phidias. Or it may be Agoracritus or Alcamenes, both famous sculptors and pupils of Phidias.

l. 147, *The wild-flower was the larger.* It is true that the flower in its wild state was larger; but the cultivated variety is richer in colour, the honey is more piquant and intoxicatingly sweet, the mere seed has become a fruit.

l. 148, *pricked, rendered acid or pungent to the taste.* Wines which have begun to turn sour are said to be pricked.

l. 152, *which, shall I dare.* The antecedent of "which" is "gift," viz., the blessing that I am what I am, that "I stand myself." This grave sincerity about himself is characteristic. Truthfulness is described by Aristotle as the mean between boastfulness and ironic self-depreciation.

l. 155, *Discourse of.* Infinitive after "dare."

l. 169, *"Thou leavest much behind."* Compare Aristotle, *Ethics*, III. x. :—"And the more that a man possesses all virtue and the happier he is, the more will he be grieved at death; for to such a one life is specially valuable."

In the passage which follows (ll. 169 to 272) Cleon rejects the doctrine that a merely ideal immortality in the memory of other men is any substitute for a real personal immortality—the indefinite prolongation of one's own individual consciousness.

l. 190, *tenantry, inhabitants.*

l. 202, *life's mechanics, the mechanical side of life, the living body regarded as a perfect mechanism.*

l. 207, *It has them and not they it.* They are conscious, but not conscious that they are conscious; they have only sensations and not the power of knowing that they have sensations.

l. 212, *intro-active, reflective, looking within.* Cleon imagines that Protus would advise Zeus to make man not only conscious but self-conscious, having a knowledge of himself as a living sentient being. Man then would gradually come to understand himself, and in so doing would become happier and happier.

l. 221, *hadst more reasonably said.* It would have been more reasonable if you had advised Zeus to stop short at the gift of sentient consciousness.

l. 227, *the rendering plain.* There seems a little confusion here. What we call an advance in creation is not "the rendering plain," that man may become self-conscious; but the fact itself that man does become self-conscious.

l. 231, *the pleasure-house.* It is difficult not to think that Browning had here in mind the opening stanzas of Tennyson's "Palace of Art."

l. 241, *still, ever, always.* The usual meaning* in sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century English.

l. 243, *Than ere thou clombst.* Than you took before you

climbed the tower ; desire no more than you did before you had self-consciousness.

l. 250, *tempting life to take*. It is joy which tempts life to take it.

l. 252, *a Naiad*. Naiads were goddesses of springs, rivers, and lakes ; and statues of them were frequently placed as ornaments in artificial fountains. The "water-bow" is of course the jet.

l. 258, *what boots, of what advantage is it*.

l. 264, "That I may be still happier—for thy use !" It is not quite clear whether Zeus is meant to say, "I shall be still happier because of thy despair," or "So long as I am happier notwithstanding thy despair."

"For thy use," is very loosely connected with what precedes. (1) It may belong to "despair," and the words will mean "despair about using the joy you see." Here "of" would mean "concerning," a frequent use in older English. (For the strange employment of "use" see just above, l. 261.) (2) Or it may belong to "happier," and the meaning will be "happier on account of my use of you."

l. 266, *As hearts beat on to doing*. As all men instinctively do thank Zeus.

l. 269, *in sum, as a total result*.

l. 279, *view of what joy is*. Cleon says we must distinguish between (1) knowing what joy is and (2) feeling joy.

l. 285, *in my great epos*. See above, l. 47, and note on p. 147.

l. 304, *Sappho*. The Greek lyric poetess, who lived about 600 B.C. Her poetry, of which only a few fragments survive, was greatly admired by the Greeks.

l. 305, *Æschylus*. The Attic dramatist, the father of tragedy, who died 456 B.C.

l. 323, *Sleep in my urn*. "Sleep" has a future force. The construction is not very clear. "The consummation [is] coming past escape when . . . I . . . sleep in my urn." It would be better to place a comma after "when" in l. 318, and regard the parenthesis as beginning at "all." It is difficult to see whether "Alive still" refers to "works," or to "I"; probably the latter.

l. 326, *Unlimited in capability*. Cleon only asks for an enlarged capacity for happiness. Abt Vogler looks for an enlarged opportunity for development. (Compare *Abt Vogler*, stanza ix.)

l. 330, *the life at large, the wider life beyond death*.

l. 340, *To one called Paulus*. The Apostle of the Gentiles.

l. 352, *as I gathered from a bystander*. Note the easy indifference of the well-to-do Greek philosopher, the burden of whose scepticism lies lightly on him ; and contrast with the eagerness of the Oriental sage, Karshish.

"CHILDE ROLAND TO THE DARK TOWER CAME"
(p. 80).

Appeared in *Men and Women* (1855). Written in Paris, Jan. 3, 1852. According to Mrs Orr it was written in a single day. "He repeatedly determined to write a poem every day; and once succeeded for a fortnight in doing so. He was then in Paris preparing *Men and Women*. *Childe Roland and Women and Roses* were among those produced on this plan" (*Life of Browning*, p. 383).

A good deal of the puzzlement which has beset readers of the poem disappears, when it is realised that we have here no precise allegory, but a mere fragment of story, woven by imagination out of a scrap of ballad, memories of a lonely tower, of a painting hastily seen in Paris, and of a figure of a horse in some tapestry hanging in his drawing-room at home. It is a fantasy, and in its essence nothing more. We may see, no doubt, here and there, bits of allegory, just as there are bits of allegory in Malory's *Morte Darthur*. But we must not hope to find any continuous ethical or spiritual meaning underlying the story as a whole.

On the story of "Childe Roland," to which Edgar refers in *King Lear* (III. iv.), see Mr Jacobs' *English Fairy Tales* (1st series), p. 117 *seq.*, with the elaborate note on p. 238 *seq.* But, however interesting, this has no real importance for the student of the present poem.

Childe, it should be added, was applied to youths of rank as a title, and occurs in this sense very frequently in old ballads. Compare "Childe Waters." It is the same word as child used in the ordinary sense; a nobleman's son was a child *par excellence*, and in mediæval Latin documents is sometimes called "infans" Compare Spanish Infante, as the title of a prince.

l. 3, askance, aslant. See p. 122, above (note to l. 28).

l. 4, on mine, *sc.*, eye.

l. 5, pursed and scored its edge. His mouth was tightly closed like a purse, and was thus thrown into wrinkles.

l. 8, What, save to waylay. The accent falls, wrongly, of course, on the first syllable of "waylay." And the preposition "with" has to bear an accent also.

l. 21, not fit to cope. The image of the ghost of hope struggling with joy of success is neither vivid nor satisfying. Exigencies of rhyming may have had something to do with the matter. But at any rate the whole of the stanza is difficult. The last few lines may mean that my hopes, having so greatly diminished, (1) I hardly thought it worth while to check the instinctive throb of joy which accompanied the recommencement of my quest, for my judg-

ment told me the quest was foredoomed to failure; (2) or I hardly tried to check the throb of joy which accompanied the recognition that the last had come, and that now definite failure was at hand instead of agonising suspense.

The second meaning fits into the simile which occupies stanzas v. and vi. much better than the first, but does not seem so naturally to express the meaning of the latter part of stanza iv. If we accept it, "now" (in l. 23) implies that until this crisis the hero had been fighting against the temptation to welcome even failure if it brought an end to his quest.

l. 47, shot one grim Red leer. A magnificent example of what Ruskin called the "pathetic fallacy," by which we see in the phenomena of Nature only a reflection of our feelings and thoughts.

l. 48, estray. Properly a stray domesticated beast, such as horse, or ox. A legal term which embodies the earlier form of the word "stray"; from old French *estraiier*.

l. 58, cockle, spurge. Cockle here does not mean the purple corn-cockle, which makes such a brave show in the summer fields, but some other less beautiful weed. The name is used in the Bible (A.V.) for various useless plants, all of them flowering. The spurges (*Euphorbiae*), too, are all flowering plants; although Browning seems to suggest by his antithesis (ll. 57-59) that they are not.

l. 60, burr. Probably the bur-dock, a coarse, ugly plant, with a thistle-like flower.

l. 66, my prisoners, the dead.

l. 68, bents, the dried stems of coarse grasses.

l. 70, swarth, dark.

Supply "if" after "as," late in the line.

l. 72, Pashing, smashing. To pash is a provincial word. Skeat says it is of Scandinavian origin, and that it is a mere variant of "box" (meaning to fight with the fists).

l. 76, One stiff blind horse. "The incident of the horse in *Ohilde Roland* was imagined from a red horse with a glaring eye standing behind a dun one, on the right hand of a large tapestry that still hangs in Browning's drawing-room" (Dr Furnivall, *Browning Bibliography*, 1881, p. 160).

l. 80, colloped neck. A collop is a small piece of meat. Dr Hill says:—"A collop is a piece of meat made tender by beating"; and thinks this is "appropriate to the red gaunt neck astrain." I fancy that Browning took "collops" to mean chops, and that the word "colloped" was suggested by the staring vertebræ of the starved horse.

l. 106, howlet, owl. "Howl" and "owl" are closely related; the owl is the howling bird.

- l. 114, *bespate*, *bespat*, covered as with spit.
spumes, pieces of froth. (Lat. *spuma*.)
- l. 117, *scrubby*, stunted. "Scrub" means low dwarf trees, from A.S. *scrob*, whence also our more usual word "shrub."
- l. 128, *presage*. Accent, contrary to custom, on the second syllable.
- l. 130, *pad the dank Soil to a plash*, tread the damp ground into mud.
- l. 136, *brewage*, brewed drink, decoction.
- l. 137, *galley-slaves the Turk Pits for his pastime*. To pit is to set to fight, as cocks used to be set to fight in a pit.
- l. 141, *brake*, an instrument of torture, a form of rack.
- l. 143, *Tophet's tool*. Tophet is hell. Originally it denoted a part of the accursed valley of Hinnom, near Jerusalem, which had been defiled by idolatrous rites, and was, therefore, turned into a sort of sewage-tank. Later on it was used as a name for the place of lost souls.
- l. 145, *stubb'd*, from which the stubs or stumps had been removed.
- l. 160, *Apollyon's bosom-friend*. Apollyon, the Devil. The Greek word Apollyon (from ἀπόλλυμι) means a destroyer.
- l. 161, *dragon-penn'd*, with wings (Lat. *pennæ*) like a dragon.
- l. 178, *scalped*, bare, devoid of vegetation.
- l. 179, *nonce*, the moment of action. *Nonce* is a corrupt form, arising from a misunderstanding of the phrase *for then anes*, in which *then* represents the dative of the definite article *the*, and *anes* (*ones*) is the adverb formed from *ane*, one, treated as a substantive.
- l. 182, *blind as the fool's heart*. "Their foolish heart was darkened." Romans, i. 21.
- l. 192, *the heft*, or *haft*, the handle, that which is *haved* or held.
- l. 203, *slug-horn*. Browning seems to have used this word without knowing what it means. Whitney (*Century Dictionary*) shows that it is used by Gavin Douglas in his translation of the *Æneid* as equivalent to *slogan* or battle-cry.

"The slug-horne, ensenie, or the wache cry
 Went for battall all suld be reddy."

Browning may have got the word from Chatterton, who wrongly used it in his *Battle of Hastings*, as meaning a kind of trumpet.

"Some caught a slug-horne and an onsett wounde."

A *slug-horn*, according to Wright, is "a short excrescence of horn hanging loose on a cow's head." Halliwell gives a somewhat similar explanation. But of course this provincial word is entirely distinct from Chatterton's and Douglas's.

HOME-THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD (p. 88).

First appeared in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845).

l. 6, bole, trunk of a tree.

l. 10, whitethroat. Called by naturalists *Sylvia cinerea*, which usually builds near the ground. It appears about the middle of April, or a little later.

l. 11, edge, end, tip.

MEETING AT NIGHT (p. 89).

Appeared, with the next poem, under the titles "Night" and "Morning," in the volume of 1845 (*Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*).

l. 10, blue spurt of a lighted match. This carries us back to the days of the early sulphurous lucifer match. The earliest friction matches were ignited by striking them on sand-paper, and were very noisy.

PARTING AT MORNING (p. 89).

See head-note to previous poem.

Dr Berdoo is clearly wrong in suggesting that this second poem is written in the person of the woman, who has "a desire for more society than the seaside house affords." Both are obviously put into the mouth of the male lover or husband.

l. 1, came the sea, the tide comes in.

l. 3, for him, for the sun.

l. 4, for me, for the man. He feels the need of work and enjoyment in common with other men.

UP AT A VILLA—DOWN IN THE CITY (p. 90).

First published in *Men and Women* (1855).

Opinions are divided as to whether the speaker is supposed to be a man or a woman. The whole type of thought and expression seems feminine; but the Italian person of quality in the days of the old despotisms was apt to be shallow and frivolous. It is argued, also, that the oath "by Bacchus," is rather a masculine than a feminine adjuration; while line 10 is hard to reconcile with the hypothesis of a female speaker.

In any case, as Mrs Orr says, the picture of city life is "a perfect variety of what it is meant to convey. The speaker's ideal 'city'

might be a big village, with its primitive costumes, and its life all concentrated in the market-place or square" (*Handbook to Browning*, p. 284).

l. 4, by Bacchus. The Italian's favourite adjuration is "per Bacco."

l. 9, shag, rough hair. Cf. *shag* tobacco, and a *shock* of hair.

l. 20, over-smoked, gray with the olive trees.

l. 27, foam-bows. Small bows like rainbows, which may be seen over waterfalls and fountains in the sunlight.

l. 42, pulcinello, properly *pulcinella*, originally a grotesque character in Neapolitan comic plays; here a monte-bank. Our "Punch" is an abbreviation of a corrupted form of this word.

l. 43, scene-picture. Perhaps a picture of a scene in the new play on the poster, displayed at the post-office.

l. 44, three liberal thieves. The Italian person of quality in the forties was apt to regard all "Liberals" as thieves, who would very properly be dealt with as brigands.

l. 46, his crown and his lion. This somewhat helps us to fix the locality. The crowned lion was the badge of the dukes of Modena, after 1814.

l. 52, seven swords stuck in her heart. The "Seven Dolours of Our Lady" are commemorated in this way. The seven are her sorrow at (1) the prophecy of Simeon; (2) the flight into Egypt; (3) the loss of her Son in the Temple; (4) the meeting with her Son bearing His cross; (5) His crucifixion; (6) the piercing of His side; (7) His burial.

The piquancy of the contrast between the smart image with its gauze and spangles and the sad events it commemorates cannot escape notice.

l. 60, yellow candles. Unbleached wax is used in penitential processions and services.

l. 61, a cross with handles. Apparently a processional cross, with a cross-piece at the bottom to carry it by. Southey saw banners carried in this way at Lisbon (*Life and Correspondence*, ii. 84).

THE LOST MISTRESS (p. 93).

First appeared in *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics* (1845).

l. 8, You know the red turns gray. The leaf buds are red at the tip.

l. 17, Yet I will but say. The last two stanzas come to this: "Although I shall never forget your glance and your voice, yet I must use no stronger expressions of affection than those of a mere stranger."

EVELYN HOPE (p. 94).

This, which first appeared in *Men and Women* (1855), stood second in popularity among Browning's poems, according to the *Pall Mall Gazette* plebiscite. Note how simple and full of sentiment it is, and absolutely devoid of characteristic Browning difficulties and oddities. It is perhaps hardly necessary to warn the reader that the elderly lover is not to be thought of as Browning himself; this, like most of his own love poems, is dramatic as well as lyrical. The mood of mind portrayed is an intenser form of the same emotion that the sedate Wordsworth gives utterance to in the lines "To a Highland Girl"—

"I would have

Some claim upon thee, if I could."

1. 19, *horoscope*. Properly an astrological diagram giving the position of the planets in the heavens at the time of one's birth. Here, as often, the actual condition of the heavens themselves.

A LOVERS' QUARREL (p. 96).

Appeared in *Men and Women* (1855).

1. 8, *Runnels which rillels swell*. Little brooks which are swollen by still smaller ones.

1. 11, *beryl*, a yellowish-green stone, something like emerald in appearance. The pebbles seen through the water suggest it.

1. 20, *ingle*, chimney-corner. Properly the fire itself, from a Gaelic word allied to Lat. *ignis*.

1. 22, *laughs*. Supply "there were."

1. 30, *The Emperor*. Napoleon III., who married the Spanish Countess, Eugenie de Montijo, in Jan. 1853. Browning, as a Liberal, disliked Napoleon, although Mrs Browning had a great belief in him. The former's *Prince of Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society*, is a poem suggested by the career of Napoleon, and, to some extent, gives Browning's conception of his character.

1. 35, *ermine-stoled*, robed in ermine, the royal and imperial fur. Most poets use the word *stole* very loosely; it means, properly, either (1) the ancient Roman matron's dress, (2) an ecclesiastical vestment, viz., a strip of silk worn over the shoulders by priests.

1. 36, *Fancy the Pampas sheen*, picture the brilliance of the great grass plains of South America.

The "sunflowers" are said not to be of the well-known kind (called *helianthus*), but are the flowers called by botanists *harpalum rigidum* (M. R. Fridham in *Browning-Notes*).

1. 43, *will our table turn?* About 1850, "table-turning" became a common amusement. The phenomena of the tilting and twisting

of the table were said to be caused by "spiritual" influence, but seem to have been due to unconscious muscular movements. Mrs Browning was a believer in spiritualism, though her husband remained a sceptic. He recorded his adverse impressions in *Sludge the Medium*.

l. 55, *Help in the ocean-space*. An example of the forced and unnatural forms of expression which Browning allowed himself, mainly, no doubt, for convenience of rhyming. The two lovers are playing at being sailors whose ship is going down.

l. 72, *mesmeriser*. There had been a temporary revival of interest in mesmerism or hypnotism, during the forties and early fifties, owing chiefly to the investigations of the Scotch doctor, Braid, and the French surgeons, Azam and Broca.

l. 82, *Shaft from the devil's bow*. A hasty and unkind word.

l. 91, *The Preacher*. The book of Proverbs and the book called *Ecclesiastes* (the Preacher) are both traditionally ascribed to Solomon the wise king. See Proverbs, xviii. 21.

l. 105, *mere mote threatens the white*. A mere speck appears on the white surface. Or perhaps (by suggesting a reference to St Matt. vii. 3), the poet wants to hint that the mote is in his eye and not at all in his wife's soul.

l. 108, *worm's pin-prick*. "The reference (not quite scientific) is to the parasitic worm *Bilharzia sanguinis hominis*, which in some countries finds its way into the circulation" (M. R. Pridham in *Browning-Notes*). Two distinct species of parasites seem, however, to be here confused together, the *Filaria sanguinis hominis* and the *Bilharzia hæmalobia*; and neither (I am told by a medical friend) produces any immediate or important effect on the heart. Probably Browning was not thinking of parasites at all, but of the sting of a mosquito or something of that kind.

l. 109, *quick, full of life, and therefore sensitive*.

l. 112, *scratch the brain's coat of curd*. A friend suggests that the worm and the scratching must not be taken too literally. He would interpret the stanza thus: Is not the nervous system (the "fleshy heart") affected by a mere prick made by an insect, the eye by a fly's foot, and the ear when it communicates the slightest sound (such as a straw would make) to the outer layer of the brain? This is not without difficulties (*e.g.*, the sensorial-centre does not lie on the external "coat" of the brain), but it is the best explanation available.

l. 131, *Thumb*. Of course, Tom Thumb of the nursery legend.

l. 133, *glum*. Gloomy, with which word it is connected. Ordinarily "glum" is only used in a metaphorical sense.

l. 135, *the gear*. The circumstances and advantages which enable us to do without each other; here, the beauty of spring.

l. 140, *crypt*. See p. 125, l. 41.

ABT VOGLER (p. 102).

Appeared in 1864 in *Dramatis Personæ*.

George Joseph Vogler (1749-1814), a German musician. He composed operas and organ music, and invented a small compact organ of four keyboards as well as pedals (called the "Orchestrion") on which he gave performances in London (1790) and other capitals. He became Kapellmeister to the Duke of Hesse-Darmstadt, and among his pupils were Weber and Meyerbeer.

"Abt" is the German for Abbat. Vogler was a priest and is here called *Abt* in the sense of the modern French *abbé*, roughly equivalent to our "reverend," but suggesting that the person is benefited.

The verse of the poem may be described as the classical elegiac form (alternate dactylic hexameters and pentameters) adapted to the English accentual prosody. The normal rhythm of the poem as exemplified in the two first lines is:—

— u u | — u u | — || u | — u u | — u u | —
— u u | — u u | — || — u u | — u u | —

but many irregularities are permitted.

l. 3, as when Solomon willed. In several places the *Koran* says that God put demons under the power of Solomon. *E.g.*, "We subjected the wind to him. . . . And the Satans—every builder and diver—And others bound in chains" (Sura, xxxviii.). This legend comes through the Jewish traditions embodied in the *Targums* or ancient commentaries on the Bible.

l. 7, the ineffable name. It has been a common belief among Jews and Mohammedans that the real name of God is unknown to ordinary men. Thus the Hebrew word, which we call Jehovah, is only a disguised form of another word; and in reading, the word Adonai (Lord) was substituted for it. Most Mohammedan theologians hold that the "exalted name" of God is known only to the prophets and great saints. It was engraved on Solomon's seal.

l. 16, on the nether springs. See Joshua, xv. 19, and Judges, i. 15. But Browning uses the expression in an absolutely different sense. The "nether springs" in the Bible are only the springs on the lower slopes of the hills; Browning's "nether springs" appear to be the foundations of the world, the real permanent basis of the universe.

l. 17, minion, favourite servant. French *mignon*, darling, favourite.

l. 18, rampired. *Rampire* is another form of *rampart*. The *t* in the latter word is intrusive; the original form being *rempar*.

Rampire is used by Sidney in the *Arcadia*, and by Shakespeare in *Timon of Athens*.

l. 23, *Rome's dome*. On great festivals, such as Easter Sunday and St Peter's day, the cathedral used to be illuminated. This was one of the great sights of the year. Every outline of the great building was marked out with lamps, which were lit almost simultaneously. The first lamps were lit at the first stroke of the clock, the whole being complete during the striking, that is in eight or nine seconds. Nearly four hundred men used to be employed to light the lamps.

space, that is the open space in front of the cathedral.

l. 31, *meteor-moons*, meteors as large and bright as the moon.

l. 33, *who walked*. Supply "those" before who.

l. 34, *or fresh from the Protoplast*. Either spirits fresh from the source of life, intended for birth in the future, but lured into the actual life of sense before their time; or else (l. 37) the spirits of the dead.

The Protoplast properly means the first created, the original material from which all perceptible things are formed.

l. 49, *the will that can*. Compare Dante, *Inferno*, iii. 95-6.

l. 52, *but a star*. A star is beautiful, and a unity. This is the characteristic feature of the chord, especially to the unanalytic ear.

l. 58, *the praises that come too slow*. The tears of delight and regret come after the palace of sound has vanished. At first one feels no fear that the beautiful thing will disappear; not even a thought of such a possibility occurs.

l. 66, *houses not made with hands*. Compare Second Epistle to the Corinthians, v. 1.

l. 67, *What, have fear of change?* What, shall I fear change in thee who art ever the same? Compare Epistle of St James, i. 17.

l. 70, *The evil is null, is nought*. For another beautiful statement of this doctrine, which is an extreme and logical form of Optimism, see Pope's *Essay on Man*, Epistle i., ll. 289-294. There is a good popular account of this and the opposing doctrine in Liddon's *Some Elements of Religion*.

l. 76, *affirms*. To be taken in its literal etymological sense. Compare *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, stanza xxv.

l. 81, *a triumph's evidence*. The evidence and pledge of a future triumph.

l. 91, *Give me the keys*. Not the keys which lock up the instrument, but the keys of the clavier or key-board. Let me feel the keys again.

l. 93, *blunt it into a ninth*. The player holds the chord CGOE, the E becomes E flat, this gives place to D (the ninth), and then he passes into the common chord of C again. Organists often

conclude an opening voluntary in this way, introducing a few additional notes.

L 96, *The C major of this life*. The commonplace and simple duties. Browning's knowledge of music is not that of a professional or a cultivated amateur, and he does not realise that keys are altogether a relative matter. The key of C is not in its essence more simple or more commonplace than any other; although as represented in our notation it seems to be so.

RABBI BEN EZRA (p. 107).

Appeared first in *Dramatis Personæ* (1864).

The old Jewish rabbi, Abraham Ibn Ezra, whose name is prefixed to this poem, was a man famous among his co-religionists of his own day. Born at Toledo in 1092 or 1093, he lived till about 1168. He travelled much in Palestine, Italy, France, the west of Africa, and reached, it is said, as far as India. England he visited in 1158, and there composed one of his works. He was not only a commentator on the Bible, but also a mathematician and astronomer.

Browning does not seem to have had any knowledge of Rabbi Ben Ezra's writings, but to have used the name only as a resource for the exposition of his own philosophy of life clothed in a quasi-Oriental dress. The Bible, and perhaps Fitzgerald's paraphrase of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (published in 1859), appear to me to have been his chief sources. Dr A. Hill (in *Browning-Notes*) thinks that the fourth book of Ezra (II. Esdras) is one of the wells from which he drew his illustrations of Jewish thought.

Dr Berdoe, however, in his *Browning-Cyclopedia* (pp. 374-6), gives some very interesting notes on Rabbi Ben Ezra, collected by Mr A. I. Campbell, which tend to show that "the distinctive features of the Rabbi of the poem were drawn by Mr Browning from the writings of the real Rabbi." The student should look this up for himself; but I confess that I remain entirely sceptical on the point.

In the anthropology of the poem, that is, the conception of the nature of man and of the relation of soul to body which it exhibits, there is nothing specially characteristic of the real Ibn Ezra, whose point of view is (as usual in thinkers of his age and race) Aristotelian, with modifications derived from Jewish tradition, and with special mystical features of his own. Instead of the wide, tolerant acceptance of the world, which we see in the sage of Browning's poem, we find in the real Ibn Ezra an element of asceticism, slight enough compared with contemporary Christian teaching, but still distinctly marked. The student may consult

Dr M. Friedlaender's *Essays on the Writings of Abraham Ibn Ezra*, 1877.

l. 4, Our times are in His hand. See above, *Andrea del Sarto*, l. 49, with note, p. 134.

Dr Berdoe gives this as an instance of parallelism between Browning's *Ben Ezra* and his original. He quotes from a German translation of one of the real Ibn Ezra's poems, "In deiner Hand liegt mein Geschick" (Sachs, *Die Religiöse Poesie der Juden in Spanien*, p. 117). But he need not have gone so far afield. The line is one of the best known quotations from the Bible, "My times are in thy hand" (Psalm xxxi. 15). It is a commonplace of Jewish literature.

l. 8, Youth sighed. Youth's insufficiency is not shown by its fickleness of choice, or its impossible hopes for an ideal.

l. 12, Some figured flame, some imagined star. A friend suggests (without convincing me) that "figured flame" means a comet or meteor, some *shaped* phenomenon of fire, not a mere point of light.

l. 14, Annulling, wasting, rendering fruitless.

l. 17, Low kinds exist without. Supply "which" before "low." For a similar view of life, compare *Andrea del Sarto*, p. 47, ll. 69-98.

l. 22, Such feasting ended, then. Supply "there would be" after "then."

l. 24, Irks care the crop-full bird? Has the bird whose crop is full of food any further anxiety? *Irk* is a word of Scandinavian origin, found in Middle English, which means, to urge, to press.

l. 28, A spark disturbs our clod. Our animal mechanism is disturbed by the fact that we have a touch of the Divine Mind.

l. 29, of God, from God. We are, as it were, tenants in chief of God, and come nearer His throne than to his humble vassals.

l. 36, throes, pang, suffering. From A. S. *þreaw*, affliction, pain.

l. 39, Shall life succeed. An inversion "Life shall succeed."

l. 44, Whose flesh has soul to suit, whose body has a soul just fitted to it, to supply it with motives for physical exertion and that is all. How little can we trace the special aptitudes of the soul to our merely physical needs.

l. 50, the Past. My own past, my youth.

l. 52, their dole, their share, portion *dealt* out.

l. 62, rose-mesh. The flesh is looked on as a net which holds down the soul. This is in keeping with Oriental modes of thought but not with modern psychology and physiology, and it is modified in the next stanza.

l. 64, Would we some prize might hold. Would that the *body*

had its reward by attaining to higher faculties of sensation and activity.

l. 66, *Let us not always say.* Let us not always look on the flesh as a mere hindrance to the spirit; it is a co-partner and a fellow-helper.

l. 74, *youth's heritage, the real gift and advantage which youth enjoys, viz., the acquisition of knowledge and the enjoyment of our life.* (See stanza ix.)

l. 81, *My adventure brave and new.* What a living poet calls "the great emprise, the deeds of after-death." Age is a period of rest between the two periods of development, that of the present life and that of the next.

l. 86, *Leave the fire ashes.* Even if the fire is left ashes, the result of the smelting is pure gold.

l. 92, *Cuts the deed off,* puts a definite end to the proceeding.

l. 95, *to the rest, sc., of days.*

l. 103, *For more is not reserved.* There is no more work for age, save to watch God at work in His world.

l. 113, *should know, than tempt further.* The "know" is emphatic. *Tempt* is for attempt.

l. 117, *Be named here.* Read l. 118, before the adverbial clause which forms the rest of this line.

l. 124, *the world arraigned.* Prefix the missing relative "whom."

l. 140, *failed to plumb, to fathom, to measure.*

l. 149, *All, men ignored in me.* Supply "which" after "All."

l. 150, *whose wheel the pitcher shaped.* This metaphor appears several times in the Bible. Compare Isaiah, lxiv. 8; Jeremiah, xviii. 2-6.

l. 158, *Last ever.* Compare *Abt Vogler*, l. 73 (p. 106).

l. 164, *Of plastic circumstance.* Of events and conditions which are not entirely fixed but are in a state of flow, and to some extent can be modified by you.

l. 167, *bent, inclination, disposition.*

l. 169, *What though the earlier grooves.* It must be remembered that the vessel is moulded on the potter's wheel from the base upwards. After it has been given the general shape required it is allowed to partially dry, and is then put on a lathe and the mouldings are cut by sharp tools.

The "earlier grooves" are the moulding tools which cut near the foot of the vessel the band of "laughing loves," representing the enjoyment of youth. The "sterner stress" of other and grimmer tools elaborates a more dreadful decoration for the highest part of the vessel, representing age.

Browning forgets that bands of ornament of this kind could not be produced by the lathe, but must be separately moulded and attached.

l. 185, With shapes and colours rife. Plentifully supplied with shapes and colours. The metaphor is confused because the potter's wheel is not supplied with either shapes or colours.

l. 189, what warpings past the aim, what straining and twisting beyond what the potter intended.

PROSPICE (p. 114).

Appeared in *Dramatis Personæ* (1864).

l. 15, that death bandaged my eyes, that death should bandage.

l. 19, the brunt, the onset or attack. Connected with *burn* (*brennan*). See note to *By the Fireside*, l. 90 (p. 129).

l. 27, Soul of my soul. We may safely assume that this refers to the poet's wife, who died, June 1861, at Florence.